

FEMALE BODIES IN MAKEOVER SHOWS:
THINNESS AS A TOOL OF OPPRESSION AND CONTROL.

Susanne Aline Ritter
University of Helsinki
Faculty of Social Sciences
Media and Communication Studies
Master's Thesis
August 2015



HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Tiedekunta/Osasto – Fakultet/Sektion – Faculty Faculty of Social Sciences		Laitos – Institution – Department Department of Social Research/Communication	
Tekijä – Författare – Author Susanne Aline Ritter			
Työn nimi – Arbetets titel – Title Female Bodies in Makeover Shows: Thinness as a Tool of Oppression and Control			
Oppiaine – Läroämne – Subject Media and Global Communication			
Työn laji – Arbetets art – Level Master's Thesis	Aika – Datum – Month and year August 2015	Sivumäärä – Sidoantal – Number of pages 102 pages + 8 pages references + 36 pages appendix	
<p>Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract</p> <p>Although there are a multitude of different aspects to the Western beauty standard, being thin has become the most important condition. These norms and standards of beauty are transported through mass media such as the television, which plays an important role in the reproduction of ideologies and beliefs. Makeover shows as a subgenre of reality TV shows reveal stereotypical expectations and subtle dynamics of power through the implication that the participant's body is defective and has to be altered for her to 'fit in' with society. Through production techniques and the contents of these makeover shows, dynamics of power between the genders become visible and they are reinforced and maintained through stereotypical representations.</p> <p>This thesis analyses the implications of the thin ideal for women and how these are portrayed, distributed and reinforced in the Canadian makeover TV shows <i>Bulging Brides</i> and <i>My Big Fat Revenge</i>. The main question guiding the research is: To what extent can the thin body standard for women be understood as a tool in the process of supporting gender hierarchies and reinforcing unequal power dynamics between the genders?</p> <p>A detailed analysis of five scenes of one episode of each show revealed that being thin is portrayed as the most important aspect for each female candidate to be happy in her life, to be successful, and to have a husband – in other words, to be a 'proper' woman. The representations are stereotypical and there is no room for individual deviations from the narrow beauty and body standard.</p> <p>Ostensibly, women have become more powerful in society. The thin ideal however serves to reinforce gender hierarchies. Fat bodies are bigger than thin bodies and pose more resistance; these characteristics are not commonly valued in women, who are expected to be small, fragile and powerless. In addition, working on and worrying about the perfection of their bodies keeps women occupied, thus making it difficult for them to dedicate their mental and financial resources on other issues. The thin ideal can thus potentially be seen as an important means of keeping women under control by keeping them mentally occupied, physically powerless and not allowing them to take up space with their bodies</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords television; makeover shows; body image; beauty standards; ideal body; fat; thinness; space; power; gender; hierarchy; feminism.			

Contents

List of Figures	2
1. Introduction	1
2. Theoretical Overview	5
2.1. Feminism and Feminist Theories	5
2.1.1. Historical Overview	5
2.1.2. Paradigms of Feminism	6
2.2. Gender	9
2.2.1. Doing Gender	10
2.2.2. Gender Roles and Stereotypes	12
2.3. Power in Connection to Gender	14
2.4. Patriarchy, Hierarchy and Power in the Context of Gender	16
2.5. Space	18
2.5.1. Concepts of Space	19
2.5.2. Space, Gender, Hierarchy and Power	20
3. Historical Background	22
3.1. Beauty Standards	22
3.2. Ideal Bodies, Body Politics and Responsibility	26
3.3. Fat and Thin Bodies	28
3.4. (Thin) Female Bodies and Relationships of Power	29
3.5. The Relevance of the Media for the Female Body Image	34
4. Methodological Perspectives	36
4.1. Research Design	37
4.2. Data Collection and Data Details	39
4.2.1. Television and Makeover Shows	39
4.2.2. <i>Bulging Brides</i>	45
4.2.3. <i>My Big Fat Revenge</i>	46
4.2.4. Amount of Data	47
4.3. Analysing Patriarchal Ideology on TV	49
4.3.1. Formal Television Analysis and Film Protocol	51
4.3.2. Semiotics	54
4.3.3. Critical Discourse Analysis	55

4.4. Validity / Ethics	57
5. Analysis	61
5.1. <i>Bulging Brides</i> Season 1 Episode 8: Just Harried	62
5.1.1. Scene 1 – Opening Scene.....	65
5.1.2. Scene 2 – The Aisle of Shame	68
5.1.3. Scene 3 – Future Vision.....	71
5.1.4. Scene 4 – Final Fitting of the Dress.....	73
5.1.5. Scene 5 – Illustrations and Graphics.....	76
5.2. <i>My Big Fat Revenge</i> – Season 1 Episode 4: Hillary and Pardis.....	79
5.2.1. Scene 1 – Opening Scene.....	83
5.2.2. Scene 2 – Hillary’s Story	84
5.2.3. Scene 3 – Pardis’s Story	87
5.2.4. Scene 4 – Hillary Before/After	88
5.2.5. Scene 5 – Illustrations.....	90
6. Results and Conclusion	93
6.1. Challenges and Limitations of the Study.....	99
6.2. Suggestions for further Research.....	100
References	103
APPENDICES.....	111

List of Figures

Figure I Example of a film-protocol for a 7 second scene from a teaser to *Bulging Brides*

Figure II Before

Figure III Before/After

Figure IV Hillary Before

Figure V Pardis Before

Figure VI Hillary Before/After

Figure VII Pardis Before/After

1. Introduction

In the modern Western society, the outward appearance of a person is of great importance for every aspect of their life. Although this is true for both male and female individuals to a certain extent, especially women are under an enormous pressure to live up to one certain, very specific kind of beauty. The goal is to be slim, young, white and tall, to have big breasts and long legs with the image of the 'Barbie doll' prevalent at all times. Although certain traits of this ideal (such as youth) are existent in various parts of the world, especially in Western countries as well as the USA being thin has become the major aspect of the beauty ideal.

Bodies are sites into which cultural practices are inscribed. Fat and thin are thus not mere body types, but carry various connotations referring to the character of the individual, such as fat equals lazy and out of control, slim equals being disciplined. As the requirements for individuals in the Western society are to be disciplined, controlled and active, especially in the USA, the stigmatisation of fat is omnipresent. (Erdman Farrell 2011: 6.)

Furthermore, fat¹ bodies can be seen as 'big' bodies and from the physical aspect alone, they are taking up more space than thin bodies. This physical space that is taken up expands into society – a big body is more visible and connoted with attributes of strength and power than a slim, small one. (McKinley 1999: 99) The ideal of slenderness, which can be identified as the norm for women today, holds several meanings.

In this thesis, I will examine the underlying meanings and implications of the thin beauty ideal for women. What I primarily want to discover is whether there is a link

¹ Speaking of body size, I will use the adjective 'fat' as a neutral term to describe big bodies, as there are certain implications to the adjectives 'overweight' (too much weight) and 'obese' (medicalization of fatness) that I do not want to reproduce. As language constitutes the world and produces and reproduces ideologies it is important to choose words carefully as to not reproduce oppressive ideas (Aphramor & Gingras 2009: 97).

between society's extreme demand for women to obtain a thin body and the still-existent inferior position of female individuals in Western society.

I will concentrate on this by asking the following question:

- To what extent can the thin body standard for women, as portrayed in the Canadian makeover shows *Bulging Brides* and *My Big Fat Revenge*, be seen as a tool in the process of sustaining hierarchies and supporting potentially unequal power dynamics between the genders?

To examine this matter the following questions will be taken into account:

- What are the main physical and behavioural standards for women in general, and according to *Bulging Brides* and *My Big Fat Revenge* specifically?
- What are the connotations of fat/thin bodies in *Bulging Brides* and *My Big Fat Revenge*?
- What (if any) are the implications of a thin female body in connection to power dynamics and gender hierarchies?

In terms of media and representation I will deal with the following questions:

- How are the women and their bodies portrayed?
- What techniques are used to transport certain kinds of meanings and implications?

I argue that beauty and body standards, as well as gender, are culturally produced. The notion that there is a cultural imperative of bodily perfection poses the question of how exactly this imperative is maintained and controlled. (Richardson & Wearing 2014: 83; Harris Moore 2014: 76.) Mass media play an enormous role in the socialisation of individuals and the transportation of meaning, therefore acting as a means of producing, reproducing and maintaining body and gender standards, norms and values of a society. Mass media as “agent[s] of socialization” (Brandt 2014: 13) are thus of great importance in terms of gender-socialisation and the sustainment of existing hierarchies and power structures – through, for example, television programmes, certain structures

are reinforced. Due to the fact that many societies all over the world, including the 'Western' society are patriarchal, male-dominated societies, men have been and still are the main producers of popular culture and media, hereby inscribing the dominant beliefs and ideologies in the contents. As there are often very stereotypical portrayals of masculinity and femininity it is important to examine media contents and reveal their hidden meanings and implications as well as how exactly stereotyped portrayals are produced and conveyed. (Brandt 2014: 15-16.)

Television in particular is a very important medium in people's everyday lives and its contents are widely consumed and absorbed. In the past years the 'makeover' shows as a form of reality television have become increasingly popular. They imply that people's (in this case: women's) bodies are defective and must be altered to meet a certain standard. These shows are particularly interesting because they reveal certain stereotypes for men and women as well as hidden structures of power not only by their contents, but also through the way they are produced. Therefore, I will examine two Canadian makeover shows, *Bulging Brides* and *My Big Fat Revenge*. By conducting a thorough analysis of several short scenes of an episode of each show I hope to reveal the production techniques and representations concerning gender, bodies and power structures that will enable me to deal with the main research question.

Although it is true for all people to have to correspond to certain body standards, I will focus on the female body in this thesis. This does not mean that men are not subject to any kind of beauty ideal – however, women are under greater pressure to live up to certain standards. To facilitate a better understanding and open up the topic to a wider audience, not only those who are familiar with gender topics, for example, I will use a binary view of sex and gender in this thesis. This means that although I am aware of, and do not want to neglect the fact, that there are intersexed bodies that do not correspond to any of those categories (see for example Anne Fausto Sterling 1993) I will use 'male' and 'female' as the two 'options' of sex/gender.

It is important to state that this research will not only concentrate on the 'beauty standards' (although they cannot be neglected in this context) but also take into account

the effects these beauty standards have. The connection between body size and taking up space and what this means for gender relations is what I will focus on. I will concentrate on the USA and Canada, as this is where the shows in question have been produced and aired, as well as the 'Western' society in this thesis, as it would be too extensive to consider the variety of other beauty ideals that exist all over the world.

This topic is a worthwhile field of study as it affects women and society to a great deal and will surely be of importance in the future, as it is only now that it is slowly being of interest for researchers. Until now, researchers have mainly focused on the beauty ideals that exist. Only little research has been done concerning the implications the thin ideal has in a broader context of society and gender relations that are, in the end, still relations of power.

To begin with, I will give an overview about feminist theories, (doing) gender and different notions of power to facilitate an understanding of certain theoretical principles. I will furthermore take into account the notion of bodies as sites where politics and cultural standards become visible and conclude the chapter with ideas about (social) space and bodies. As the beauty ideal is not a continuous one, but subject to changes throughout time and in different cultures, the next chapter presents a historical overview of the ideal body and outward appearance from the past century and nowadays as well as certain implications of different body forms. As this thesis deals with a specific aspect of bodies, the size, I will mainly focus on body size instead of other aspects of the outward appearance. The theoretical part will end with a short introduction to the portrayal of bodies in the media, specifically makeover shows.

The following chapter about methodological perspectives presents the study design as well as a detailed description of the data and the chosen research methods. The subsequent analysis examines the chosen scenes in a certain order, which facilitates the understanding of the overall structure of the chosen makeover shows. The thesis will close with the discussion of the results and perspectives on further research.

2. Theoretical Overview

Dealing with the thin body standard for women in the context of feminism, gender and hierarchies requires an understanding of certain theories. Therefore, this chapter presents an overview of theoretical concepts and perspectives, which will serve as a basis for the following analysis of the shows *My Big Fat Revenge* and *Bulging Brides*. To begin with, I will present an overview of feminism and feminist theories, which will then lead to gender in society. The subsequent parts of this chapter will deal with concepts of power, notions of space and the connection between gender, space and power in the context of traditional hierarchies.

2.1. Feminism and Feminist Theories

Although multiple implications can be deduced from slenderness with some of them rooted in philosophy, religion, or history, this thesis will focus on the gender-related aspects. (Bordo 1989: 18) This thesis will, amongst others, concentrate on the question of whether there is a relation between the need for women to be slim with the, still existent (although often denied) inferior position of females in the gender structure of (Western) societies. In this subchapter, I will give a brief introduction into the different feminist theories as well as a short historical overview to facilitate the understanding of the theories referred to in this thesis. As this thesis is based on the idea of sex and gender as two different categories, I will focus on the theoretic understanding of gender as a constructed category.

2.1.1. Historical Overview

The meaning of the term ‘feminism’, which appeared in 19th century France for the first time as ‘féminisme’, can be explained as a women’s movement that is directed towards a new self-conception of women and the modification or removal of the traditional gender roles and hierarchies (Karsch 2004: 8). The final aim of feminist theory and its practical application is, to put it very simply, more social equality. Nowadays, feminism is a heterogeneous and diverse movement that includes other categories besides sex and gender, such as age, class, ethnicity and religion. Scholars such as Margret Karsch

(2004) understand the French Revolution in 1789 as the starting point for the process of democratisation in Europe and the beginning of the first-wave feminism. As Andrea Moser (2010) states, revolutionary Olympe de Gouges, who wrote the 'Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen' in 1791 as an answer to the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen' (being the outcome of the French Revolution), can be seen as one of the first female activists fighting for social, political and legal equality for women. The first-wave feminism, appearing in the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, was concerned with the rights of women concerning education and the law system. The second-wave feminism which appeared in the 1960s dealt with questions concerning division of labour and the liberation of women from a male society characterised by male domination; it can be seen as the source for the modern understanding of feminist theories as well as women's and gender studies. The 1990s mark the beginning of the third-wave feminism and the Queer Theories, which focus on the deconstruction of the hierarchical order of genders. The aim of this movement is to make the invisible visible and is, amongst others, strongly characterised by the works of Judith Butler (see for example Butler 1991), as will be referred to later. (Moser 2010: 30; Karsch 2004: 8.)

2.1.2. Paradigms of Feminism

Feminism as a theoretical concept formed in close connection to the women's movements. As Andrea Moser (2010: 31) states, there are different 'feminisms', however, all of them aim to criticise and change the order of society as well as existing relations of power that discriminate against women. Although the concept of equality exists in every feminist approach, they differ from each other in regards to how to achieve equality, what sex/gender is, and the respective ideas on gender relations.

Andrea Moser (2010) identifies, amongst others, three important paradigms in feminist theories: equality feminism, difference feminism and postmodern feminism.

The idea of equality feminism, which came up in the light of the second women's movement in the 1960s, was that men and women are basically equal and the same. The category 'sex' was not seen as a crucial component as this approach focused on the

gender aspect of masculinity and femininity. It was assumed that due to different socialisation, men and women might develop and pursue different interests but they possess the same skills by nature. This led to the demand for equality (who is equal deserves equal treatment) and thus equal rights for men and women and the strong position against the discrimination of women. Critics claim that this theory focuses on the man as the norm, which reproduces inequality, thus maintaining instead of ending it. (Moser 2010: 31; 34.)

In the 1960s and 70s the idea of difference feminism appeared. Men and women were seen as different and the positive traits of females and being a woman were emphasised. The biological 'sex' was deemed important as it was seen as the root for differences between males and females due to the fact that it constituted different experiences, thus leading to different behaviours and characteristics. Although men and women were seen as equal in the sense of deserving equal rights, these rights should be achieved through different treatments depending on female or male characteristics. One criticism of this is that it is reproducing binary gender categories. (Moser 2010: 34.)

According to Moser (2010) the third paradigm, postmodern – or de-constructivist – feminism, formed as a reaction to the idea of the binary structure of sex and gender. The basic assumption opposes the theory of only two sexes (male or female) – contrary to other feminist approaches, which see it as a given fact. Rather than 'being assigned' a sex at birth through hormones or genitalia, every individual produces and reproduces their own sex through discourses and social processes. To ensure the functioning of society, individuals are required to act in certain ways, hereby producing their sex and, through that, reinforcing their gender. Individuals are furthermore not only required to produce their own sex/gender, but the expectation of the other one to participate in the process of gender and sex production and reproduction contributes to the functioning of the interaction between individuals. An example could be a person constructing his sex as male – by, for example, being in a heterosexual relationship with a woman – and thereby producing a basis for expectations towards his masculinity, which he assumes is expected by the other individuals he is in a discourse with. The main aim of these

feminist ideas is to deconstruct gender and sex as structural categories and thus contribute to equality and the deconstruction of gender hierarchies in society.

Critics claim that through deconstructing the category ‘woman’ or ‘female’, the object of the whole concept ‘disappears’, thus making it difficult to argue in favour of equality for a non-existent group. (Moser 2010: 36.) This paradigm of feminist theories is influenced by the theories of Michel Foucault concerning discourse as well as by Judith Butler (see for example Butler 1991).

It is common practice nowadays to attempt to understand the different ideas of feminist theories not as opposing, but rather as supporting each other and contributing to gender equality in different, but supplementary ways (Moser 2010: 36). However, although postmodern feminism is widely accepted, there is a phenomenon in contemporary feminist theories that rose at the beginning of the 21st Century but is still present: post-feminism. Even more so in recent years a generation of women claim to not need feminism anymore, as they have already achieved liberation and equality. Imelda Whelehan argues that these approaches can be seen as rather anti-feminist – women are made believe that they are in control. However, this is true only in terms of control of the “right to consume and display oneself to best effect”; there is no aspect of empowerment when it comes to, for example, spheres of politics. (Whelehan 2000: 3-4.)

This approach can thus be seen as a “withdrawal from a wider political arena” that does not try to empower, criticise hierarchical structures or deconstruct unequal power relations, but rather serves to maintain those structures by making women believe that feminism itself goes against femininity and female self-determination. There has been a “backlash” against feminist ideas, which holds a great power. Feminism is presented as old-fashioned and as a means of “female tyranny” that is rejected by many, especially young women, meaning that sexist and unequal structures and hierarchies are upheld and reinforced once more. (Whelehan 2000: 4; 36.)

2.2. Gender

It is important to clarify the concept of sex and gender in order to understand any feminist paradigm or theory, as well as the implications certain stereotypes have regarding male and female individuals for the whole of society. First conceptualised in the 1960s to be able to deal with critical theories about men and women, the theory has been commonly established and is substantial for feminist theories nowadays. Through discourses in medicine dealing with transsexuality, in 1968 psychoanalyst Robert Stoller claimed the relation between the biological sex and the social traits of men and women to be more complex than commonly understood. The distinction between ‘sex’, meaning the biological component, for example genitalia, and ‘gender’ as the social component, which is learned and re(produced) in daily life, and interaction between individuals – ‘doing gender’ – was established. This distinction posed the basis for any theories to question and deconstruct inequality and hierarchical structures due to the new conceptualisation of the causes of (possible) differences between men and women. Differences were no longer seen as ‘natural’ which opened the discussion in terms of male and female roles and functions in society.

Nowadays, there are a variety of critical/cultural approaches to sex and gender – postmodernism, deconstructionism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, queer theory and cultural studies. (Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski 2014: 43.) As Jantine Oldersma and Kathy Davis (1991:5) state, “gender is central for understanding sexual dichotomies, behavioural differences between the sexes, sexual identity, sexual divisions in social activities and the symbolic representation of masculinity and femininity”; thus, the concept of sex and gender is important for all the feminist paradigms.

Judith Butler (1990: 96) sees gender as “a part of what ‘humanizes’ individuals within contemporary culture”. According to her, society punishes those who “fail” to do their gender right – there clearly is a high expectancy in society to behave according to the gender that is assigned. Butler (in Knapp 2000: 82-85) furthermore understands the categorisation of sex and gender as a site in which power relations become visible, also because the category of ‘woman’ is produced and inhibited through exactly these

structures of power that could (or should) serve as a means for emancipation (see for example Butler 1991: 17). Butler's idea is of importance when dealing with power structures related to relationships between men and women.

2.2.1. Doing Gender

Gender can be seen as the result of the process of the interactions between individuals that is connected to an activity (the production of gender itself). The concept of 'doing gender' is the basis for theories related to the construction and deconstruction of gender and gender roles as well as hierarchies and power relations in society. The main assumption is that social as well as biological characteristics of men and women are seen as being produced in social constructivist processes, meaning that gender is not just the product of the influences a society has on its members, but is produced and reproduced by the members itself. Scholars Candace West and Don Zimmerman described the concept of 'doing gender' in relation to this process in the 1980s (West & Zimmerman 1987 in Moser 2010: 46), arguing that an important part of this process is not only the actions of the individual that displays his or her gender, but also the expectations and receptions and, through that, the attribution of gender through the reaction of the other individuals.

A distinction can be made between sex as a biological component and gender as the social component, and this distinction itself can be seen as culturally produced. Judith Butler, who coined the term of 'gender performativity' (Moser 2010: 51; Butler 1991), claims that gender and sex identities are produced through repeated actions – especially language is deemed important in her theories. Performativity refers to actions that are performed over and over again, thus constituting the identity (in this case gender identity) of an individual. The 'action' of gender – that can be seen as a performance, which is repeated – is "at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established"; it is the "mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation"(Butler 1990: 97). Gender characteristics are no longer mere characteristics of individuals, but have to be produced and reproduced in processes and interactions. The negation of this process is described as a naturalisation of the (often perceived)

differences between men and women. This naturalisation is criticised by West and Zimmerman (West & Zimmerman 1987 in Moser 2010: 46) because it renders differences as naturally given and impossible to change.

As pointed out by Moser, 'doing gender' is based on mostly unconscious classifications and identifications that individuals make on a daily basis before any interaction even happens. Institutionalised knowledge about what is deemed appropriately male or female is used to form expectations towards the counterpart in an interaction. The processes involved are so internalised that they are not even noticed, hereby facilitating a naturalisation, which renders critical objectivity of the processes difficult or impossible. These processes of identification (is the person male or female?), classification (male!), and expectations (he should behave in a certain way) appear in every single interaction and produce and strengthen gender roles and stereotypes through approval and disapproval of an individual's ability to appropriately perform their gender.

The idea of producing gender in every interaction (and with it certain characteristics of the specific gender) leads to the assumption that through acting and reproducing their gender, individuals furthermore produce and reproduce differences by characterising and categorising themselves and others, meaning gender hierarchies and relations of powers are influenced in a remarkable way. (Moser 2010: 46-49.) The assumption of only two sexes/genders, that is prominent in most Western societies, leads to individuals being forced to show their affiliation with exactly one of these categories through their actions and in interactions with others. This process constitutes and strengthens the dualistic system of male and female and reinforces binary gender categories. Through the idea of two sexes/genders, the concept of normativity is produced, that not only works through assigning individuals to the categories of 'male' and 'female' – and all the connected implications – but that is also strengthened by society's heteronormative standard. There is a connection between sexual desire and belonging to a sex-category which also has an impact on hierarchical and power relations between men and women.

The idea of ‘doing gender’ and gender as a process of construction, also means that categories could be deconstructed and new ones could be constructed to escape this dualism – this is what postfeminist theories aim for.

2.2.2. Gender Roles and Stereotypes

Stereotypes can be defined as generalised assumptions and beliefs about certain groups of people that are not necessarily accurate. They are acquired in the process of socialisation by obtaining knowledge through, for example, observing and experiencing situations, but furthermore through representations such as mass media contents. The characteristics that are ascribed to groups of people, for example ‘men’, can be thought of as being present as ‘dimensions’ rather than ‘lists’, as one attribute. For example ‘strength’, is always connected to a variety of similar traits, such as ‘power’; at the same time, an association with contrary traits takes place (‘weakness’). (Alfermann 1996: 9.)

Categorisation can be seen as the reason and basis for stereotypes. To reduce complexity, people categorise the world they experience and arrange the individuals that surround them into groups according to certain similar traits. Sex, and thus gender, is among the most important and strongest factors of the identification and classification of humans. Sex/gender can be seen as a personal attribute as well as a social category in the process of stereotypical categorisation. (Alfermann 1996: 11.) Besides the idea of reducing the complexity of the social sphere, the categorisation furthermore serves to sustain certain structures by valuing some categories or attributes more than others.

While stereotypes change over time and differ throughout societies, it is a fact that the stereotyping of humans according to their biological sex is a prevalent feature in Western societies. Every body is a gendered body; in the gendering of individuals hierarchical relationships of power become visible which are deeply rooted in the Western societies, as Lorber (1998: 13) states. Although people can be born with an unclear biological sex, the individual is in most cases assigned to one of the categories ‘woman’ or ‘man’ as quickly as possible, as the Western world is built on the dichotomist notion of ‘male’ and ‘female’ that can be seen not only as different

categories, but different classes. Judith Lorber claims that the categories ‘male’ and ‘female’ are constructed through social processes transforming “female and male physiology into a condition of inequality” (Lorber 1998: 13), meaning that there is a gendered hierarchical social order. Most people support this by going along with their ‘assigned’ gender, because the “norms and expectations get built into their sense of worth and identity as a certain kind of human being” (Lorber 1998: 20). The attributes, which are ascribed to a person, depend on the given sex: if a person falls into the category ‘female’, feminine attributes are assigned (and vice versa for males).

There are a variety of attributes associated with men and women, and masculinity and femininity can still be seen as stereotypes, as Victoria Pruin DeFrancisco and Catherine Helen Palczewski (2014: 11) claim. Female stereotypes are influenced by ideas of femininity and are largely defined by a woman’s sexuality, especially in terms of reproductive roles and functions. Stereotypically, women are said (and somewhat expected) to be emotional, friendly, sociable, helpful, and understanding. Furthermore, the female stereotype includes passivity and social and emotional intelligence. There is a clear contrast between the stereotypical man, who is said to be strong, assertive and overall more self-centred and active (Alfermann 1996: 14). As Susan Bordo (1993: 12) similarly claims, one of the strongest and most basic assumptions about the genders is the dualism of ‘male-active’, ‘female-passive’.

When it comes to gender roles, it is crucial to understand that although they are somewhat similar to gender stereotypes, they differ in the sphere of expectations towards an individual. While stereotypes are beliefs rather than specific expectations, the idea of gender roles is based on concrete requirements depending on the social category a person belongs to. However, the expectations towards the genders go along the lines of the stereotypes. Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2014: 11) argue that there are expectations towards women to be “emotional, a caretaker, sensitive, compassionate”, whereas men are supposed to be “rational, independent, tough, aggressive”. Furthermore, women are required to be communicative, considerate and focused on others, to hold themselves back and not take up too much space or attention.

The idea of space is of particular importance when it comes to notions of hierarchical and power structures; men are not as restricted as women but rather encouraged and expected to take up space, be present and visible. This is, for example, reflected in ‘gender adequate’ traditional clothing (skirts for women, trousers for men) that serves to restrict or enable movement and spatiality depending on the gender. (Sobiech 1991: 47.) The common gender stereotypes and expectations towards individuals depending on their biological features point towards a hierarchical structure. The dichotomy of male-active and strong; woman-passive and weak suggests an unequal distribution of power, that is not only reflected in the expectations towards the behaviour of individuals, but even more so in the expectations towards their bodies.

2.3. Power in Connection to Gender

In the most basic definition, power can be seen as the ability to influence others. Furthermore, the control of resources such as knowledge, money, or space, can be identified as the basis for power (Henley 1977: 19). It is crucial to understand that power is involved in situations even though there is no obvious conflict (Oldersma & Davis 1991: 9), and that power, status and dominance become visible in nonverbal behaviour (Henley 1977: 27).

Power exists on several levels and is not necessarily a negative idea itself (Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski 2014: 47). It does not only exist on an interpersonal level, but more importantly also on an institutional level. On this level, social categories lead to differences in power that benefit some and oppress other groups. Amy Allen (1996: 267) identifies the micro level, meaning the specific power relation between two individuals, and the macro level, meaning the cultural practices and context of said power relation. Sandra Lee Bartky (1998: 27) describes three methods that serve to support and sustain power relations: actions that produce a certain body (regarding size), actions that reinforce this body through gestures, postures and movements; and the actions that display the body as an “ornamented surface”.

Although acknowledging certain ideas of Michel Foucault (see for example Foucault 1977) Susan Bordo (1989: 15) states that it is important to not see power as something occupied by one group, but to rather understand it as a network of practices, institutions and technologies that sustain positions and relationships of dominance. In regards to the conceptualisation of power by Michel Foucault (see for example Foucault 1977), Jana Sawicki identifies two possible models of power: the juridico-discursive model and Foucault's own theory of power, which are both based on three assumptions. The juridico-discursive model claims first of all that power is possessed by certain groups (for example by a class); second, that power emerges from an authority and flows from the top downwards (state, law, economy), and finally that power works by exercising repression (rules backed by sanctions).

Although Foucault's own theory also involves three assumptions, these differ from the juridico-discursive model especially due to the fact that he tries to explain power relations working at a micro-level and thereby enabling repressive, concentrated types of power in a society. His theory states that power is applied or exercised instead of merely possessed. Rather than viewing power as a top-to-bottom force, he analyses it as flowing from bottom-to-top.

Regarding the first assumption, Foucault's understanding of power means that it is possible to concentrate on the power relations themselves instead of being preoccupied with the subjects that may or may not possess power. This way, the process of how subjects are constituted by power relations comes into focus and can be analysed. Foucault views power as something that is productive, shaping institutional and cultural practices which in turn produce individuals. Disciplinary power, which is what cultural and institutional practices exercise, influences people's minds and bodies. In our society, it is spread through processes of knowledge, such as sciences, but also through acts that lead to knowledge about people, such as surveillance or examination. These function as tools of the normalisation of individuals and social control and can, of course, also be observed in technologies that convey knowledge, such as mass media.

The assumption in Foucault's theory that power should be analysed at micro-levels can be understood as the claim that power is exercised in and through social relations. As power relations in social interactions belong to networks of domination, which in turn shape society, it is possible to analyse social phenomena such as class power or patriarchy by examining the power structures. (Foucault 1977 in Sawicki 1991: 20-23.) These conceptualisations are of importance to study power dynamics in relation to gender due to several reasons. Unequal power relations are not created from one instance on the top and flow to the bottom, but are rather produced in everyday actions (such as the process of doing gender) at micro-levels. Furthermore, the structures of power are distributed and reinforced through media, which can be observed in the context of gender norms and stereotypes, which are conveyed through the mass media and pose a powerful means of influence. They can be described as having the function of a panopticon, exercising control and restraining people's behaviour. Disciplinary power, lastly, can be seen as a strong factor in the process of shaping woman's minds and thus bodies. (See for example Gill 2007.)

Rose Weitz (1998: 3) states that requirements towards women's bodies are an important part of questioning or, even more importantly, sustaining relationships of power between the genders, meaning that the beauty and body standards can be understood as "tools in an ongoing political struggle". To reveal existing hierarchies and dynamics of power it is crucial to shed light on the structures of the Western society, which can be described as a patriarchal society. In the following subchapter, I will therefore attempt to give an introduction into the basic understanding of society as a site in which patriarchy and hierarchy are omnipresent and of great important for any interaction between the genders.

2.4. Patriarchy, Hierarchy and Power in the Context of Gender

To study sex and gender in society it is crucial to deal with systems of hierarchy. According to Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2014: 45) systems of hierarchy "refer to the cultural patterns and institutional structures that maintain inequality between groups." Differences between the genders are created and sustained through culture and

reinforced through norms, ideology, traditions and popular culture. They are rarely based on equality, but rather lead to inequality as one gender (male) is constructed as privileged over the other due to the fact that this one gender plays a greater role in the process of the construction itself. Systems of hierarchy exist that are ingrained in social, political and economic institutions; these systems explain the inequality between the genders. (Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski 2014: 45-47.)

Muriel Dimen (1989: 38-39) claims that patriarchy, besides being a political as well as an ideological system of domination, can be seen as a structure of power that is commonly explained by naturalising gender differences. This means that, in a way, gender is produced and sustained through patriarchy. According to Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2014: 46), patriarchy is not merely the domination of one man over another, but “a hierarchical system, that exercises hegemonic control wherein men are privileged over women”. The idea of a hegemonic – meaning predominance – of masculinity serves to naturalise a system of patriarchy in which men dominate and women subordinate (Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski 2014: 84).

There is a connection between gender and power as inequality between the genders that becomes visible in power relationships and hierarchical structures of the gendered society (Oldersma & Davis 1991: 1). The categorisation of individuals into ‘male’ or ‘female’ on the basis of their bodies and the assignment of arbitrary characteristics according to their gender leads to an inequality between the genders that is a universal fact in many cultures and societies. Therefore, to study gender, gender roles and relations, it is essential to examine hierarchical structures because not only these structures, but also the specific characteristics of genders, can be seen as the ideological background to sustain a certain order in society. (Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski 2014: 43; 45.)

Because the hierarchical structures benefit certain groups, these groups are interested in maintaining certain structures. As Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2014: 7) argue, this can be seen as the reason why people believe in differences between men and women and put great effort into maintaining these categories, although research has

proved that the idea of great differences between the genders is mainly political. It is very important to understand that the categorisations and differences are never neutral, but always lead to and are connected to hierarchical structures and thus inequalities. Culture encompasses structures of inequality, hierarchy and power; these systems are socially constructed. Therefore, also the characteristics and attributes that are commonly ascribed to men and women (and thus constructed as male or female) are socially constructed and function to sustain certain structures of inequality.

As shown in this subchapter, there are certain ‘traditional’ norms for people of each gender that, as scholars such as Naomi Wolf (1990) have argued, serve to keep structures of power in place. These norms are expressed through the need for women to adhere to a very narrowly defined beauty standard – being thin – which is presented as the only way to gain acceptance and a place in society, thus making it the basic prerequisite for a happy, fulfilled life. This standard is sustained by ascribing negative attributes to the unwanted, fat body.

Although the negative attributes that are connected to the fat body certainly play a substantial role in maintaining the beauty standard, there is another aspect that can be seen as crucial – body size. Larger bodies simply take up more space, which is an important part when it comes to power and strength. Therefore, the next subchapter will give an introduction into concepts of space and their connection to the whole sphere of gender, hierarchy and power dynamics.

2.5. Space

The term ‘space’ as such is, first of all, an abstract concept, but can be seen as a part of our reality in which social interactions take place; it is a site of conflict and discourse. In this subchapter, I will discuss the notion of space in different contexts and from different points of view. Space can refer to various concepts; in this thesis, it means a concept of personal space that is connected to body size and will be examined from a feminist research point. Therefore, this subchapter will deal with the relation between

gender and space and the impact body size has on negotiations of spatial aspects in social interactions.

2.5.1. Concepts of Space

Scholars such as Gundl Rauter (1998) identify different types of space such as private, public, architectonic, lived and social space. When it comes to private vs. public space it is important to distinguish between different zones in the public and individual space. Public space is open to all people, whereas the individual space is private and must not be entered without permission. Different zones categorise different types of interpersonal relationships. Hall (in Rauter 1998: 32-34) identifies four zones: the intimate zone, which facilitates body contact and requires a relationship of trust between individuals; the personal zone, which enables communication; the social zone, which makes contact between individuals possible but does not entail it; and the public zone, which does not enable direct contact between individuals. The types of zones and their dimensions depend highly on cultural and historical factors. Furthermore, they are determined by the status, relationship and gender of the individuals involved. (Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski 2014: 89.)

Whereas lived space is determined by the individual who influences the use and perception of space, architectonic space is a defined space, for example, between walls – ‘room’. Considering that the individual is the centre of conceived space, every human action has a spatial aspect, which enables the individual to experience space in and from different perspectives and angles. Lived space is not only observed by individuals, but it is produced in and through communicative actions and can thus be seen as a result of human interactions. (Rauter 1998: 34; 39.) This means that space is never neutral because hierarchical structures are always perceivable. These structures are based on social factors such as race, class, status and gender (Nissen 1998: 130).

Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2014: 89) refer to the studies of the ‘embodied’ space (the way in which individuals experience their bodies in physical spaces) as ‘proxemics’, meaning the “invisible area around a person that is considered his or her

private space”. In this thesis, space refers to the social and individual space ‘around’ an individual in relation to others. The idea of ‘taking up space’ consequently refers to the amount of space the individual occupies with his or her body, movement, and overall presence (Rauter 1998: 29). Through our bodies, we take up and occupy space, examine boundaries, respect or disrespect them and enter other social and personal spaces. This understanding of space is especially crucial for the power dynamics between individuals in a gendered society.

2.5.2. Space, Gender, Hierarchy and Power

Culture has a direct influence on our bodies precisely due to practices and bodily habits of everyday life. Our bodies learn the appropriate behaviour through routine and habitual activity – including, amongst others, the idea of how much space can be claimed. Pavlidis and Fullager see space as “inherently political, for it is in (and through) space that relations of power are resisted, negotiated, fought and overcome” (Pavlidis & Fullager 2014: 23).

The size of the space that is occupied by an individual (his or her own personal space as well as the personal space of others and the public space) is influenced by their body posture, movement and nonverbal language, gestures and behaviour. The space around an individual can be seen as some kind of a ‘safe’ space; if another individual enters that space, he or she comes close and possibly violates the borders of the other one. The size of that personal, safe space depends on the social status of the person, which is determined by class, age, and gender. Consequently, the process of invading the other person’s private space and taking up space through movement and the own body can be seen as a sign of a hierarchical relationship. Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2014: 89) claim, that “in the United States, taking up personal space (...) is commonly associated with power and status. Who is permitted to invade another’s space also can reveal intimate relations and/or power differentials.”

Not only do men commonly have a larger space around themselves, but there are also differences in the genders when it comes to movement, body posture, nonverbal body language and general bodily behaviour. The restriction in movement and the space

women claim is, even today in our supposedly ‘equal’ society, quite visible in everyday life, going from nonverbal behaviour when not in movement (for example sitting) to actions in conversations and behaviour in motion. Women are, and act, more restricted; this is true for their movement and their spatiality. Women are generally taught to sit with their legs together, arms near to the body, taking up little space, whereas it is socially acceptable for men to sit with their legs wide apart – they “expand into the available space”. (Bartky 1998: 29-30.)

The amount of space a person occupies is, quite obviously, related to the size of the person’s body. “Thus, the cultural norm that masculinity be signalled by more muscular and taller bodies makes the larger use of space more legitimate for men, even if many men are not larger than many women” (Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski 2014: 89). Drawing parallels to the idea of territoriality, it is possible to argue that those who take up more space are dominant (Henley 1977: 26). Nancy M. Henley (1977: 17) argues that “males are more likely to have power, females to be out of it”. This status quo is sustained by a system of dominance, which serves as a ‘reminder’ for each member of a society to know his or her place – not only in the literal sense, but also figuratively. As Susie Orbach claims, fat plays an important role in the process of negotiating space for women by creating the space that women need. Through acquiring more weight (and thus occupying more space), women want to be able to physically take up more space and consequently more space in society. (Orbach 1978: 20-21.)

The need for women to be small and delicate can be seen as an expression of the need for female individuals to literally take up little space, thus keeping them from figuratively taking up much space in society and challenging existing power relations (see for example Wolf 1990). This assumption is important for the notion of the thin ideal as some kind of a tool for maintaining existing power and hierarchical structures. However, the implications of fat and thin bodies have not always been the same (and will, most probably, change again in time), meaning that it is important to deal with the historical background of beauty and body standards. I will therefore present a historical overview of beauty standards and the connotations of fat and thin bodies in the next chapter to facilitate a deeper understanding of its implications.

3. Historical Background

Bodies as a text can be read as a social, cultural, and gender statement (Bordo 1989: 16). The idea of the fat-free body as the ideal body started to spread in the Western culture mostly during the past century; it has now arrived in all social classes and has become the quest for everyone who wants to take part in society and have a fulfilled life. The thin body is not only connected to health or fashion issues but it is a main concept of a complex topic which contains certain underlying political implementations and makes structures of power, for example between social classes or genders, visible. Nowadays, good looks are no longer perceived as given by nature, but have rather become an achievement. This leads to several issues, which I will discuss further in the next sub-chapters.

To begin with, I will give an overview of the changing beauty standards throughout the last century to then turn to the notion of ideal bodies, body politics and the idea of personal responsibility. The connotations of the fat and thin body and the implications of these for the individual are presented here. This chapter will end with an overview about concepts of power that serves to clarify the connection between a thin body and the overall dynamics of power in society. Finally, I will give a short introduction into the study of bodies in the media, which represents the transition to the next chapter.

3.1. Beauty Standards

The notion of beauty standards has undergone severe changes during the past centuries; especially the opinion towards fat and thin bodies has been subject to change in the past one hundred years. The history of changing beauty and body standards dates back to ancient societies that had considerably different notions of the ideal body than, for example, people in the Middle Ages. However, the focus in this research lies on the more recent development, starting approximately from the 19th century.

As historian Roberta Pollack Seid (1989: 38) states, nowadays “fatness is ugliness”, whereas from around the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century a woman was deemed beautiful if she was heavier and had a round, full figure (Fraser 2009: 11).

In contrast to the prevailing ideal of thinness, late 19th and early 20th century advertisements even encouraged women to put on weight to be more attractive to their (future) husbands, whom they would not even find without a certain amount of fat. While this is still an example for women being subject to (albeit changing) beauty and body standards to fit into society and be of pleasure to men, it does show a very different approach to the size of bodies (Pollack Seid 1989: 72).

Apart from the connection of a fat or thin body with beauty, in the 19th century a full figure furthermore indicated a certain status in society. A certain amount of fat was seen as an indicator for desirable traits of the wealthy middle class; fat was equated with money and prosperity (Pollack Seid 1989: 72). In the United States, this image started to change especially during the 1910s, with the beauty ideal shifting towards thin, square figures (in men and in women) and fat slowly began to be seen as a risk for people's health. Nevertheless, there was still the notion of a little fat being healthy and bigger women still being the ideal to a certain extent.

The greatest shift in the idea of the ideal body took place in the mid-1920s – fashion required women to be stick-thin and the 'boyish' figure was crucial for a woman to be seen as attractive. Historians have drawn a connection between the increasing visibility of a woman's body at the beginning of the 20th century through clothing that revealed more than, for instance, in the decades and centuries before and the newly emerging ideal of thinness. Fashion was tailored to fit slender, straight figures, which constituted a new notion of the ideal body. This view continued for the following decades, albeit with changes in certain features of the thin figure, with especially big breasts deemed as attractive nowadays. At its height at the end of the 20th century, models were required to be as thin as possible to meet the fashion industry's standards. Thin became the new ideal.

The shift in fashion in the 1920s was not only a shift in body standards, but also a turning point concerning the requirements women faced: their bodies were now openly visible by the change in fashion and thus subject to the assessment of men. Being thin, a status that was until then involuntary and caused by a lack of food, turned to a trait that

was necessary to possess to not only symbolise a certain class, but also to please men. It was crucial to ‘find a good husband’ to be a person of worth as a woman. Thus, possessing the favoured body type meant a chance to acquire a superior position in society. (Fraser 2009: 14.)

During the 20th century, there was also a shift in the desired traits of a woman. It had been the main task for a woman to be a mother in the past centuries, but she was now sexualised (supported by the discovery of birth control pills, which facilitated a different sexual behaviour) and her body was increasingly subject to an assessment based on sexual criteria. Women were not only required to ‘keep their shape’ to find an ideal husband, but also to take care of their bodies to keep the relationship alive and pleasant for the man. As Pollack Seid (1989: 92) states, it became obvious that the sexual attractiveness of a woman was one of her most valuable traits – this is still visible nowadays, as being thin is seen as the main precondition for having a fulfilled sexual life and for being deemed sexually attractive. The thin ideal can thus also be seen as a symbol for the sexualisation (and, to a certain extent, objectification) of a woman’s body.

Many scholars suggest that one of the reasons for the recent development and the fat beauty ideal of past times was connected to the availability or non-availability of food. A fat body was the sign of a person being able to afford larger amounts of food and a lifestyle that did not require heavy physical labour – fat was seen as the proof of richness and an upper-class-position in society. When food became readily available for most of the people at the beginning of the 20th century, it was no longer only the privilege of the upper middle class or wealthier upper class to have enough to eat. As being fat spread to the poorer levels of society, it was not any longer seen as a sign of status. As Margaret Mackenzie (personal communication with L. Fraser, June 12th, 1996 in Fraser 2009: 12) points out, being thin became the possibility for the upper-class people to separate themselves from the ‘lower’-class – “it became chic to be thin and all too ordinary to be overweight.”

A reason for the connection between fat and undesirable moral traits may be, according to Laura Fraser, that many intellectuals in the beginning of the 20th century were thin – albeit mostly due to illnesses. Seeing authors and poets being thin soon lead to the connotation of thinness with desirable traits such as delicacy (due to a high death rate of the sick poet-population), sensitivity and intelligence. (Fraser 2009: 12-13.) In addition, (over-)indulging in food and thus acquiring a heavy body was deemed immoral, especially by the Northern American population. It was seen as a favourable trait to restrict oneself, deny needs and desires and, through this, lead a life closer to God. The idea of restriction is still prevalent nowadays – fat people are seen to ‘take more than they deserve’ and to take up too many resources and too much space. This is especially true for women, who are supposed to restrict themselves and be rather moderate. (see for example Bartky 1990; Henley 1977.)

Additionally, different industries (first of all, as expected, the fashion industry) noticed the change in society and used it for their own advantage – after all, it became possible to sell images and dreams of beautiful bodies and encourage people to have a certain figure to be able to wear the latest fashion trends. While this might also have been true for men, it did affect women to a much greater level. The dream of thinness and the traits connected to it (for example freedom and innovation) became a product that was worth selling. A cultural obsession emerged, which, especially in the United States and Europe, became firmly established “when several disparate factors that favoured a desire for thinness – economic status symbols, morality, medicine, modernity, changing women’s roles, and consumerism – all collided at once”. (Fraser 2009: 13.)

Now, in the beginning of the 21st century, the beauty standard is quite narrowly defined, with women being required to be “not only painfully thin, but muscular and buxom” (Weitz 1998: 4), which, according to historian Pollack Seid (1989) requires women to not only spend time on exercise and money on products to enhance beauty, but also a vast amount of ‘emotional energy’ on their outward appearance, thus taking up resources that could otherwise be used differently.

Naomi Wolf (1990: 2) identifies the overall beauty standards in regards to women as “the beauty myth”. She claims that beauty can be seen as a currency system. By establishing a hierarchical system in which certain bodies are valued more than others, women are placed in certain positions in this vertical system and made to compete against each other for social resources and acknowledgement. Thus, according to Wolf, the system of beauty standards can be seen as a reflection of power relations in society and an expression of male dominance – as men are the ones who traditionally assign the values – as well as a tool to keep these structures in place. (Wolf 1990: 3.)

3.2. Ideal Bodies, Body Politics and Responsibility

Body Politic, in the old metaphor, meant the image of the state or society as a human body, with the organs symbolising different functions and forces. As Susan Bordo (1993: 21) states, feminism turned this idea to the image of the human body as being a politically inscribed entity itself. Also Jana Sawicki (1991: 95) understands the body as both an object and a means of disciplinary practices. The physiology of the body is shaped by history and cultural practices as well as practices of containment and control, which can mean painful alterations of the body to meet certain standards, as, for example, the practice of foot binding or wearing a corset.

According to Susan Bordo (1993: 4), the idea of the instinctual nature of the body brings with it the notion of it being a fully mechanical, biologically programmed system that can be modified and controlled. This idea does not only concern the body, but the whole ‘self’. As Estella Tincknell states, the self has become a “collection of disparate body parts to be endlessly worked on or even replaced” (Tincknell 2013: 86), which is especially interesting in the context of the large amount of reality makeover shows. These shows promise that, by altering (almost) every part of the body, it is possible to alter also the ‘self’, thereby facilitating integration and, in the end, a happy and fulfilling life in society.

Beauty and the overall outward appearance of the body have changed from traits that are ‘given’ by nature and that can only be changed to a certain extent to characteristics

that can be altered more or less freely. There is a notion of the necessity of working on and for the ‘perfect’ body, meaning that people who do not work hard for their looks and are unhappy as a result are held accountable for it – their unhappiness is, thus, their own fault. Over time, there has been a significant change in the idea of personal blame. While, as historian Pollack Seid (1989) states, women were not held as accountable for their ‘natural’ body size in the past, it is nowadays seen as necessary to work for the perfect body; if a woman’s body (size) is not in accordance with the overall standard, it is her fault and her responsibility to change it. Although at the beginning of the 19th century it was possible (and to some extent, necessary) to alter the body shape through clothes, such as corsets, it was not yet as necessary as it is today. Furthermore, a body that did not correspond to the ideal was not seen as a fault per se and, more importantly, it was not seen as a failure of character. (Pollack Seid 1989: 73.)

In our neoliberal society, the individual is required to participate as a consumer and a self-controlled subject; those that achieve thinness and self-discipline are valued higher than those who do not. Thinness is not only viewed as a “reflection of self control”, but also becomes a criterion on the basis of which “one is treated like a subject” (Guthman 2009: 193). By incorporating social and cultural norms and making political structures visible, the thin body as the ideal body can be seen as the reflection of social and cultural capital that promises or prevents success, depending on whether or not the ideal can be reached (Kreisky 2008: 149).

By regulating and restricting individual lives in regards to movement, space and time, bodies are moulded and formed by cultural practices and expectations (such as the ‘proper’ way of feminine or masculine behaviour) and thus become what Foucault (1979) calls “docile bodies” (Bordo 1989: 14). Foucault (1977: 136) defines ‘docile bodies’ as bodies that “may be subjected, transformed and improved”; discipline produces those bodies and through this, individuals. According to him, disciplinary power is effective through mechanisms such as hierarchical observation and normalising judgement (Foucault 1977: 170). In a metaphorical sense, the methods of observation and judgement, as conceptualised through the idea of the panopticon, are visible in society in terms of self-judgement and normalisation of one individual by

other individuals – this enables the functioning of power in an automatic way. This is true for gender-related as well as beauty standards as deviations from each are sanctioned and they are maintained through the internalised fear of the individual of precisely these sanctions.

3.3. Fat and Thin Bodies

The Western society is fixated on the outward appearance to such an extent that the worth of a person can be seen as determined by physical attributes – this is especially true for women. There is quite a direct equation between the body's correspondence to the beauty standards (which means, in the end, being thin) and the overall opinion towards the person and his or her character. Especially in the United States, there is a particularly negative perception of bodies that do not correspond to societal norms. This is true in terms of most beauty standards – also 'ugly' women are subject to discrimination and oppression – and is especially the case with bodies of size.

Even from a medical point of view, it is not particularly easy or clear what exactly constitutes fatness or thinness. There are various approaches and measurements to determine what weight makes a person fat – however, as Friedrich Schorb (2008: 57) states, all of them are correct and wrong at the same time, as they take different measurements and numbers into account that do not necessarily give a clear answer. In any case there is a clear categorisation and in some cases medicalization that takes place when talking about 'over'-weight or obesity. The term 'over'-weight implies a 'too much' of weight, which points towards 'occupying' more weight than one is supposed to – this is true particularly for women who are supposed to contain themselves and not take up more space, resources or power than they are supposed to. The term obesity indicates a disease, which leads to the ones that suffer from this 'disease' having the responsibility to work on becoming healthy; they are seen as responsible for their life and (supposedly) unhealthy body. Fatness represents everything that is not appreciated in Western society, such as excess, sin and boundlessness – in the modern society, discipline is what is required, and this is supposed to show in the bodies too. (Schorb 2008: 57.)

According to Kathleen LeBesco (2004: 8), a fat person is categorised as a “failed person”, who is not able to or not wanting to participate in society. Although this is a radical view, the opinion towards fat women is overall negative and, as Sandra Lee Bartky (1998: 28) claims, “massiveness, power or abundance in a woman’s body is met with distaste”. Fat people are mostly seen as lazy, unattractive, non-sexual and out of control, making it obvious that fat is equated with a character defect (Prohaska & Gailey 2009: 159). Thin bodies on the other hand are perceived as the favourable bodies. By obtaining a thin body, a woman does not only achieve ‘good looks’, but moreover all the other manifold qualities that come with it. The thin body conveys the message that the person is successful, controlled, disciplined and accepted. As Jane Ogden (1992: 22-23) states, thinness suggests control over work, food, and life as well as control over temptation and desires. Similarly, LeBesco claims that that thin people (and again, especially women) are equated with discipline, competence, self-control and intelligence. The ideal body is no longer only slender, but rather flawless and the acceptable variations have become narrower over time. Any fat is seen as an undesirable trait, which has to be ‘eliminated’ to achieve this ideal body (LeBesco 2004: 55-57).

Furthermore, the thinner (smaller) a woman is, the less space she takes up, and the more she conveys the subtext that she needs protection. This is a very interesting point of view, as it corresponds with the widespread expectations towards women that they be controlled, disciplined and resist temptation – overall, hold themselves back and not claim more than they ‘should’. By behaving in a socially acceptable, submissive way, women ‘gain’ the right to be loved and protected. (Ogden 2002: 23.)

3.4. (Thin) Female Bodies and Relationships of Power

As Susan Bordo (1993: 16) argues, bodies are not just physical entities attached to the mind, but they can be seen as sites where social and cultural practices become visible. Similarly, Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski (2014: 101) view the body as a “location on which gender/sex identities are communicated, constructed, maintained and challenged.” Certain bodily features are marked with certain characteristics; these determine an individual’s role and position in society. These characteristics are not

natural but they are culturally constructed and appear within relations of power, thus making them subject to change depending on place and time (DeMello 2014: 5-7). Especially for women, whose lives are based on their bodies and outward appearance to a large degree, the influence that culture has on their bodies is enormous and an everyday fact. Susan Bordo (1993: 143) even claims that “the social manipulation of the female body emerged as an absolutely central strategy in the maintenance of power relations between the sexes”.

In earlier times (and, to a certain extent and in certain countries, today), women’s bodies were understood as the property of the men closest to them – fathers, husbands and brothers. Still nowadays, in the beginning of the 21st century, a woman’s body can be seen as some kind of ‘property’ of men, as the general notion in our society is still that the body of a woman has to please the eyes of men. Still in the present days, but even more so in the past centuries it was a woman’s duty and role in society to find a husband, get married and be a good wife and mother. In fact, her role in society was defined by which husband she had and whether or not she was married.

Although this is not as much the case nowadays, it is still seen as important for a female individual to ‘find’ a male individual, who will define her status and worth. (Weitz 1998: 3.) Although the principle of marriage as an institution intended to provide security is decreasing in Western culture, it is still present and relevant for gender-based hierarchical power structures in societies. (Karsch 2004: 12-14) A woman’s body can thus be seen as some sort of social capital in this case; the more (standardly) beautiful a woman is, the easier it is for her to find a husband, which will define her worth and make her a full member of society. By corresponding to beauty standards women convey the message that they understand their need to be desirable in order to obtain their place in society and they can “increase their marriageability and gain economic and social stability” (Ogden 1992: 5). If a woman does not correspond to the beauty standards and society’s demands regarding her outward appearance, she is not only likely to face discrimination and humiliation, but she is also often seen as unfeminine and asexual – these are obviously very negative and unfavourable traits in a culture

based on sexual attractiveness as social capital (Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski 2014: 86).

As stated earlier, the requirements and standards for the female body are numerous. Women are, for example, supposed to be small and fragile and the female body is socially constructed as a delicate, feminine one. These traits can, in fact, be seen as signs of the “construction of an oppressive, feminine norm” (Bordo 1993: 18). The ‘vulnerabilities’ of femininity are used to construct, train and maintain female subjectivity by the everyday bodily requirements. The (cultural) characteristics of women’s bodies are of great importance when it comes to the power relationships between male and female individuals – in terms of possession, physical and mental power and claiming of space. (Weitz 1998: 3)

Although it is socially acceptable for a woman to have a certain amount of lean muscles to look toned, it is by no means accepted that she develops more strength than her (male) partner. As Sandra Lee Bartky (1998: 35) words it: “the bride who would tenderly carry her groom across the threshold is a figure of comedy, not romance”, as the role of the stronger, bigger partner in a relationship is still reserved for men. A fat woman is, thus, the opposite of the required female ideal; she is the “antithesis of what it means to be appropriately feminine” (Giovanelli & Ostertag 2009: 290).

Women are, still nowadays, required to focus on the needs of others – men – and to regulate their own needs in order to not be excessive. When examining the thin ideal from this point of view it becomes clear that there is an analogy between the physical hunger for food and metaphorical hunger (concerning the position of women in society). Female hunger as well as eating is constructed as something shameful that has to be controlled. A thin woman, managing her hunger and disciplining her needs, can be seen as the manifestation of the command of society that female hunger “for public power, for independence, for sexual gratification” should be controlled – thus defining and restricting the space (physical and metaphorical) she is allowed to take up, occupy and claim (Bordo 1989: 18).

It is interesting to examine the question why it is exactly the slender, thin, small body that is seen as the ideal body in the Western society nowadays. Jane Ogden (1992: 1-3) states that, in general, the female body is seen as something to control and master and sees beauty and body standards as playing a central role in “creating the weakness” of females. The ideal female body, being a very feminine, slim one, offers little resistance to physical abuse, and takes up little space. (Bartky 1998: 35). This specific ideal of a ‘not-too-strong’ woman facilitates relationships of power, as very thin women are generally not able to pose as much resistance to a person with a stronger, bigger body.

The way in which ‘ideal’ female bodies are constructed can indeed be seen as a form of oppression, expressed through certain characteristics of the desired body language and body forms. Besides the fact that a slender, thin body lacks physical power, it is furthermore a significant variable in terms of social space. The terminology itself speaks of an ideology. The term ‘over’-weight implies that there is a ‘normal’-weight, which should not be exceeded to stay in the norm. If we refer to a fat person as ‘over’-weight, it implies that this person has ‘too much’ of weight, and is taking up too much space, resources and power in society. This is interesting when it comes to the fat female body – an ‘over’-weight female individual takes up too much space in the sense of power, influence and strength in society, which is not appropriate for women and must thus be prevented by establishing the thin ideal for female bodies and by this keeping women in their place in society. (Thoms 2000: 284.)

The need for women to be slim can also be explained with the idea of ‘keeping women under control’ as fat people are seen as ‘out of control’, taking up too much space and resources and not keeping to their place in society (see for example Prohaska & Gailey 2009: 159). Thinness can be seen as the “visible manifestation of the ‘control and transcendence’ of and over the loathed body”(Hatrik & Attig 2009: 201). The idea of keeping women under control does not only mean controlling their physical abilities by keeping them literally powerless, but furthermore exercising power by directing and controlling their mental and temporal resources. Women are required to be occupied with their outward appearance all the time, be it by eating the right things, wearing the right clothes, exercising, moving in an appropriate way, standing, sitting, walking,

talking in an appropriate way – in short, creating the appropriate feminine female body by submitting themselves to beauty standards.

These actions of course take time – time that could be used for other thoughts, ideas or projects that are not connected to self-improvement. Susan Bordo (1993: 166) claims that the actions centred on self-improvement, which can be seen as “central organizing principles of time and space” in many women’s days, distract women from being socially orientated but rather make them “more centripetally focused on self-modification”. For her, the normalisation of the female body is a “gender oppression that exercises itself” that furthermore “has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control” (Bordo 1993: 166). This strategy can serve to maintain and strengthen gender hierarchies and unequal power relations and render them immune against any attempts of change. Through creating the illusion that being thin is *the most important* trait of a woman that will lead to acceptance, success and even love, all her resources such as time and thoughts will be focused on achieving this goal; it is thus difficult or impossible to criticise the structure and direct any actions towards social change. In fact, the process of dieting can be seen as bearing analogy to self-starvation, which is rendering the individual powerless – physically as well as psychologically. (Wolf 1990: 158; 161.)

Interestingly, the concept of creating, improving and modifying the body in order to achieve a certain social status can also be seen as an empowering, self-determined and emancipating action. However, this has to be seen critically (and has been, see for example Bordo 1993). The idea of a thin body as means of empowerment is, on the one hand, probably true to a certain extent, as it creates possibilities for women to take control over their bodies and thus their lives. On the other hand, this idea is very deceptive. By disciplining and shaping their bodies, women allegedly gain control. The reality, however, proves to be different. To be able to take part in society and ‘find a man’, women *have* to be thin; it is not an option but a precondition and requirement. Being thin is such a powerful concept due to the fact that it is not only about attractiveness but moreover about positive qualities that are associated with the character, leading to a strong desire to be thin not only for the outward appearance but

in fact due to the fear of being seen as a ‘bad’ human being in terms of character and attributes. (Ogden 1992: 24.)

In the 21st century, women supposedly have equal opportunities. However, the fact that they are required to spend enormous time and effort on the maintenance of their bodies points to a process that directs all energy towards bodily practices of discipline and improvement instead of facilitating participation and the use of (mental, as well as financial) resources in and for the public sphere. The act of exerting practices of discipline and normalisation on the female body can thus be seen as a very powerful and highly effective form of social control, reproducing, reinforcing and sustaining itself over time. (Bordo 1989: 14.)

As Naomi Wolf (1990: 4) claims, the specifics of the current beauty standard, especially the need to be thin and young, all point towards a standard that is decidedly directed towards keeping women powerless, as on the one hand a bigger, stronger body would mean more power, and on the other hand, an older, more experienced person is regarded as more powerful in a society. The thin body can be seen as a small, weak body that does not have much strength to resist other bodies. Furthermore, the preoccupation of women with their outward appearance means that they do not have mental resources to deal with their surroundings in a critical way, which would possibly enable them to challenge these standards.

3.5. The Relevance of the Media for the Female Body Image

Nowadays, all people (male and female) in Western society are under constant influence of media images that not only pose propositions, but rather demands on how to look (Wolf 1990: 6). It is through media that we learn what women are supposed to look like, what kinds of bodies are acceptable and unacceptable, and that we learn how to act to meet those requirements or how to deal with bodies that do not meet them (DeMello 2014: 119).

Margo DeMello (2014: 117) points out, that women's bodies are "constantly on display" and women are aware that they are constantly judged by their appearance. In a way this can be seen as an expression of the idea of society as a panopticon – through the knowledge of being watched and judged, women's bodies turn into self-disciplining subjects, reinforcing and sustaining hierarchy. Television in particular can act as a 'panopticon', meaning an instance of surveillance, social control and judgement. As Dina Giovanelli and Stephen Ostertag point out, this control is influenced by the patriarchal society and inflicted especially on women's bodies, thus making them subject to men's criteria. (Giovanelli & Ostertag 2009: 295.)

Mass media can be seen as possessing the power to define body standards, also because of the process of embedding norms and ideological concepts in a medium of entertainment that is directed to the 'average' person. This process facilitates identification and influence (Harris-Moore 2014: 9; 174) and plays "an ideological role" (Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski 2014: 225). As Susan R. Bordo puts it, the highly visual media-culture of the present times "may function as a backlash phenomenon, reasserting existing gender configurations *against* any attempts to shift or transform power-relations" (Bordo 1989: 14). Nowadays, makeover shows that are directed at altering and perfecting the body serve as tools to reinforce gender and beauty standards and can be seen as a site where power relations become visible, not least through the idea of the male surgeon who alters the body of a woman, thus forming her to meet certain requirements (Tinknell 2013: 87).

As media do not simply represent, but rather "re-represent" society and the prevailing beliefs, media contents produce ideologies through the coding of images with certain meanings, norms and ideas that conform to the predominant ideology (Richardson & Wearing 2014: 6). This is true for the body image and the connoted attributes, which is why it is important to examine media contexts in regards to the production of certain norms, hereby producing and reproducing body standards, ideologies and hierarchies. The analysis of the two chosen shows, which concentrates on the contents and therefore meanings that are produced, will take place in a scientific, objective way through certain methods, which will be described in the next chapter.

4. Methodological Perspectives

In the following chapter, I will describe the methods used in this thesis to investigate the chosen research questions and provide an explanation as to why I chose exactly this data, the methods and the overall approach to the study design. I will then give an overview of the research design as well as present the amount and scope of data in detail. After a short introduction to television as a mass medium as well as the genre of makeover shows, the chosen shows will be discussed and summarised briefly. Furthermore, I will explain how and why the specific amount of data I chose benefits the study and analysis.

Due to the specific nature of the topic, the data and the research questions, there are a number of analysis methods, which seem appropriate for this kind of research. There is a multitude of qualitative research and analysis methods, which would possibly be acceptable – however, I chose only three (film analysis, semiotics and critical discourse analysis) that I will combine to facilitate a deeper understanding of the topic. I will give a short introduction of each and summarise why exactly these are suitable for a thorough analysis of this topic. The ethics and validity of the study will be the final part of this chapter.

As stated in the previous chapters, this thesis focuses on the topic of slim bodies and gender hierarchies. To briefly restate the aims of the study:

The main research question is:

To what extent can the thin body standard for women, as portrayed in the Canadian makeover shows *Bulging Brides* and *My Big Fat Revenge*, be seen as a tool in the process of sustaining hierarchies and supporting potentially unequal power dynamics between the genders?

To reveal not only *which* but also *how* certain ideologies are constructed through television programmes, I have chosen a qualitative and critical approach to the research question, as will be discussed further on.

4.1. Research Design

The omnipresence of mass media is characteristic for contemporary Western culture and society. Norman Fairclough (1995: 12) states that the power of media includes the construction of particular representations of the world, not least our perception of what appropriate and accepted masculinity and femininity is (Richardson and Wearing 2014: 5). Television plays a large role in transporting knowledge, including stereotypes and popular beliefs as well as cultural norms and values. Television contents, in this case certain programmes and shows, can be seen as types of ‘texts’, because they are seen to have enough coherence to be referred to as a single object (Gray & Lotz 2012: 27). Through the critical analysis of these texts, the messages that are transported and the representations that are constructed can be revealed. Because programmes and shows on television do not represent reality in an objective way, but construct a reality that is representative of predominating social structures, they are a space where ideologies become visible. (Fairclough 1989: 45.)

Ideologies, in the sense of predominant concepts of the world, are upheld by particular relationships of power (but also vice versa). If we assume that television distributes prevailing ideologies, it is possible to analyse power relationships and hierarchical structures through television programmes. Media analysis from a feministic point of view tries to “make visible the invisible” (Richardson and Wearing 2014: 19) and examine the connections between images and structures of power, inequality and domination (Gill 2007: 7). Critical analysis focuses on inequalities and structures of oppression – in this case, the analysis of how images construct and reproduce these relations of power is crucial (Gill 2007: 54). A critical feminist approach means not only that power relations in general will be analysed, but also that there will be an emphasis on predominant hierarchical relations in terms of gender.

It is important to stress the fact that the chosen methods are not those that primarily count and categorise certain facts and figures in a large amount of data. They are rather meant to reveal processes of (re)producing structures in society in general as well as relations of power in regards to gender hierarchy, in particular on the basis of a smaller sample. Therefore, they focus on the critical approach and aim to uncover these

processes. A study such as this one that concentrates on revealing the underlying structures of power and ideology can only be examined by critical qualitative methods, as quantitative methods would generate results that would not be particularly helpful for examining these specific, critically orientated research questions. Depending on the study and research design it would have been possible to use other methods, such as content analysis (qualitative as well as quantitative); however, these methods focus on the ‘how much’ rather than on the ‘how’, which is not my goal. I believe that a qualitative study is more suitable for the critical approach to the topic as I attempt to analyse how specific techniques reflect and (re)produce certain societal structures. Furthermore, as scholars like Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2014: 29) argue, qualitative methods are suitable to “reveal the unique influences of context”. Therefore, because the cultural context is what produces meaning in the end, a qualitative approach provides the most suitable tools to, in this case, deal with the portrayal of women’s bodies on television in regards to the production of hierarchical relationships.

Due to the very similar structures of the makeover shows, it is fruitful to analyse a small amount of data thoroughly, as the results can then be extended to the whole genre. It suits the general critical approach of this specific study better to analyse a small amount in a critical way than to analyse a bigger amount in a more observant, indifferent or summarising way.

To take into consideration as many aspects that play a role in the construction of meanings as possible, I will make use of various methods. The triangulation makes sense in this case as television texts have a multitude of dimensions that contribute to the overall role the particular programme plays in transporting certain contents. This is only possible by taking into account various aspects of the chosen programmes (such as contents, production, post-production), as will be explained further on in this chapter.

4.2. Data Collection and Data Details

Because television as a commercial mass medium is of great importance for the process of transporting norms, beliefs and ideologies, I will examine television shows in this thesis. The two chosen formats, *Bulging Brides* and *My Big Fat Revenge*, will be analysed by choosing one episode of each that will then be examined in depth by using several critical analytic and interpretative methods. As the approach is a qualitative one that will deal with several aspects and layers of the respective episode, this rather small amount of data has been chosen.

The collection of the data has been facilitated through the internet. Although the shows have been aired in Canada and the USA, they are accessible through various websites in full length. The homepages of the shows furthermore provide background information as well as summaries of particular episodes. The fact that the show *Bulging Brides* is rather ‘old’ in terms of the rapidly changing media scene has created difficulties in the sense that some websites concerning this specific show could no longer be accessed through normal search engines. As the websites are, however, still accessible through archive-websites, the data collection was possible and successful.

4.2.1. Television and Makeover Shows

Television has been changing ever since the first contents were aired and despite changes in technology, the notion of television as a space where ideologies and knowledge are produced and portrayed is still valid. Jeremy G. Butler goes as far as to refer to television as the “predominant meaning-producing and entertainment medium of the last half of the twentieth century” (Butler 1994: xi) – this still remains true nowadays in the beginning of the 21st century due to convergence of media.

Convergence describes the development of media in the past decades and has been facilitated by technological progress. It can be defined as “the process whereby previously separated media technologies merge together” (Bignell 2004: 158). Especially the merging of the internet and television, such as the fact that shows can

now be viewed online and on several devices, opens up new possibilities for users and viewers to customise and individualise their use of television.

As Jenn Brandt (2014: 103) argues, habits of television watching have changed in a way that time-shifted and streamed (online) content is preferred by the viewers. Through the rise of digital television, meaning digital broadcasts that are no longer aired, but received through cable and the internet, the production, the reception and overall usage of television have evolved tremendously in the last 15-20 years. Due to digitalisation, through which contents can be compressed to take up less space, television contents are now provided on a variety of platforms, such as computer screens, laptops, or mobile phones. To a certain extent, viewer behaviour has changed from the use of traditional television to internet television use. Internet television refers to content that can be viewed online, after the show has been aired on television - sometimes for a couple of weeks or more after the airdate. This means greater flexibility for the viewers as well as increased access as it is possible for people without a television set to watch certain shows. (Gerbarg, 2009: 1-2.)

The question of whether television in the traditional sense is dead has been approached by scholars such as Gali Einav and John Carey (2009: 115-119) by claiming that the change in television production, distribution and viewing has not 'killed' the medium, but rather contributed to a different way of using it. One major change concerns the viewing habits of the audience. Although techniques like video recorders and cassettes that came up in the late 20th Century made it possible to record shows and access them later, overall, television used to be organised in the sense that there were strict programme schedules which could not be influenced by the viewers (except for choosing at what time they turn the television on and off or whether they watch a show at all).

The internet poses a new, easy possibility to choose when and where to watch a certain show providing the audience with the possibility to watch only a few minutes, rewind, watch the episode again when they have the time or stop it in the middle – no matter on which device and in which place, solely depending on their preferences. Episode

watching on the internet is increasingly popular, which shows that the traditional form of watching television (by sticking to one whole episode) has been transported from the technological medium 'television' to the medium 'internet' without losing its importance. (Einav & Carey 2009: 121.) According to Brandt (2014: 103), the fact that the viewers changed their habits instead of turning to a different medium shows the importance that television still has in the present popular culture.

Viewers are becoming increasingly familiar with new patterns of viewing and Einav and Carey (2009: 128) predict that watching television will become "more like reading magazines" as people consume it on-the-go, at different times and different places. As Darcy Gerbarg (2009: 2) states, the motto in regard to consuming content will be "what, when, where you want it". This leads to the assumption that while traditional television already had a great importance in influencing people's lives, the new technologies (such as viewing what you want when you want) make it possible for it to be even more adapted to the "rhythms of everyday life" (Ouellette & Hay 2008:102). Television thus manages to bring programmes deeper into people's day-to-day world.

The contents of television programmes change according to predominant cultural beliefs and popular views which leads to the portrayal of innovative and traditional as well as stereotypical representations side by side, thus facilitating the normalisation of ideologies. Through reproducing traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity, reality television in particular is contributing to the reproduction and reinforcement of binary structures, hereby sustaining sexist ideologies and inequality. (Brandt 2014: 112; 115.)

This brings with it the fact that television programmes portray certain ideals that people have to conform to in order to be a valuable member of society and have success in their personal lives (Gill 2007: 54). Especially women and their bodies are subject to these ideals. Niall Richardson and Sadie Wearing (2014: 88) claim that there are a great number of media contents, which first and foremost instruct women what they should look like. In the past decade, a type of show has gained popularity that focuses on changing (women's) bodies and lives: the makeover show. Rosalind Gill states that

these shows require people (predominantly women) “to believe first that their life is lacking or flawed in some way, and that it is amendable to reinvention or transformation by following the advice of relationship, design or lifestyle experts, and practicing appropriately modified consumption habits” (Gill 2007: 263). The shows most often start with the production of shame in the participant through humiliation (portrayal of supposedly ugly body parts, unhealthy eating habits etc.), which is in many cases emphasised by a male voice-over that explains the crucial points of critique. After being coached by the ‘lifestyle experts’, the participant is set free to start her ‘new’ life with her ‘perfect’ body. (Richardson & Wearing 2014: 88.)

Brenda R. Weber (2009: 3) states that makeover shows as texts are typically structured similarly. There is usually an introduction, in which the participant and her problems (and the reasons for the problems) are shown, partly emphasised by drastic pictures. The process of the extreme alteration begins with the surrender of the candidate to the experts, which makes the paradox of subordinating oneself to achieve empowerment clearly visible. In the following part, there is the process of ‘transformation’, which is facilitated by experts and most often commented on by a male voice-over. The participant is shown in difficult moments to emphasise her struggle with said transformation and to show that she is working hard for her new life. The show typically culminates in a scene in which the ‘new’ and ‘improved’ version of the participant is presented to friends and family and it is shown that her life is, of course, much better than it was before.

The construction and structure of the makeover text makes power dynamics visible through the clear contrast between the candidates and the experts. Doctors are most often presented as omniscient, they are often active and masculinised (meaning they are ascribed masculine attributes), whereas the candidates are nearly always female, passive ‘victims’ of their own bodies and looks, and feminised (meaning they are ascribed feminine attributes) (Weber 2009: 17).

In contrast to home makeover-shows that deal with the improvement of lifestyle, most of the body-related makeover shows (such as *Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan* in the

USA or *Extrem Schön – endlich ein neues Leben* [extremely beautiful – a new life at last] in Germany) concentrate on weight loss and beauty. Naturally most women do not correspond to the very narrow beauty ideal, which leads to more and more women being made to believe that they are somewhat flawed and that they have to work on themselves to be able to ‘fit in’ – literally in the case of *Bulging Brides*, where the brides want to lose weight to fit into their wedding dresses.

The message is clear: it is only possible to achieve happiness and a good life through a body that corresponds to the beauty ideals and is thin. (Gill 2007: 263.) This becomes visible in the two shows that will be analysed in this thesis. Although taking different parts of women’s lives into consideration, the focus clearly lies on weight loss and optimisation of the outward appearance (for various reasons). The connection between the physical and social body as a symbol for the role and status in a society are articulated and both shows, albeit in different ways, emphasise the need for normative body alteration for access to a “better self and a nicer life” (Weber 2009: 30).

There are a vast amount of makeover shows in Canada, Europe and the USA. Despite the fact that most, if not all of them, would surely be of great interest for a study like this as most of them deal with women, stereotypes of beauty and gender in some sort of way there are a few aspects that made me focus this study exactly on these two shows. First of all, the show *Bulging Brides* concentrates on a very specific group of women: brides.

The fact that women can actually be seen in the category ‘bride’ is interesting on its own, as it reveals a lot about the still required stereotypical role of a wife for women (even in ‘Western’ society). Marriage, as Richardson and Wearing (2014: 6) state, is not only the bonding of two people, but first and foremost the union between two heterosexual people. There are a vast amount of meanings that are expressed through the entire practice, for example the idea of marriage being the pathway into the mainstream of society (especially for women) that leads to a generally happy life, acceptance by fellow individuals as well as the fulfilment of heteronormative standards, which is the key to said life (Weber 2009: 13). The general idea of the show that women

have to alter their bodies before fitting into their dress, which can be seen as being 'worthy' of being a bride and thus being ready to fit into the tight standards of a 'normal' life to be ready to marry is very specific and connected to gender stereotypes.

Similar shows include *Bridezillas* (focusing on the life of brides before the wedding) and *Shedding for the Wedding* (focusing on couples trying to lose weight for the wedding), both aired in the USA. In addition, the show *The Last 10 Pounds Bootcamp* features the same experts, who help participants to lose their 'last 10 pounds'. These shows, particularly *Bridezillas* and *Shedding for the Wedding* were not chosen for the analysis for several reasons.

Bridezillas depicts the whole life of the bride(s) before their wedding day, meaning it is not specifically portraying weight loss as the perquisite for marriage. Although analysing this show would have been very interesting in terms of the overall image of women (especially the 'bride out of control' theme indicated by the title, which bears reference to the fictional movie-figure of Godzilla, a destructive monster), my interests in this thesis lie specifically on the topic of the implications of female body standards for society. Weight loss is an important theme for this, which it is not in the show *Bridezillas*. The show *Shedding for the Wedding* portrays couples losing weight together. This show could have been analysed in regards to the different beauty requirements and body standards for men and women concerning their wedding (day). However, this would be a topic for a different thesis and different research questions would have to be asked.

I do not attempt to compare the beauty and body standards for women and men, but rather uncover the techniques that are used to construct an ideal for women, which is then in turn used to sustain hierarchical structures. Therefore, I chose *Bulging Brides* as one of the two shows, as it focuses on women as brides and specifically their 'need' to lose weight in order to be 'ready' for marriage.

The show *My Big Fat Revenge* takes a different approach than the standard weight-loss and surgery makeover shows. The fact that the women in this show lose weight to take

revenge clarifies the requirements in Western society: people that are fat could never take revenge, because revenge can only be taken with a ‘perfect’ body; in fact, the perfect body itself serves as a means of revenge. In this show, the idea of being empowered through submission to experts is reinforced, which is typical for makeover shows. (Weber 2009: 3-4.) Regarding *My Big Fat Revenge* the end scene involves the success of having had revenge on the person that humiliated the participant earlier. Also in this show, ideologies become visible that will be discussed further in the analysis.

4.2.2. *Bulging Brides*

Bulging Brides is a makeover show that was first aired on Canadian television in 2008. It consisted of one season with 19 episodes; each episode of about 22-24 minutes in length features one female participant – the ‘bride’. The participants are women who have applied to the show. Apart from the bride, the closer family (the husband and possibly children) are featured and at the end of the show, when the ‘result’ is revealed, the wider family and friends are also part of the show. The show was produced by the *Eyes Television Production*, based in Vancouver, Canada, in 2008. It has been aired on *Slice and Discovery Health Channel* in Canada and *The Network* in the US. (Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias 2000-2014.)

The plot is the same for each episode: six weeks before the wedding, the soon-to-be-bride realises that her (supposedly, a few weeks before, perfectly fitting) dress is too small. Naturally, as the website proclaims, “No woman wants to be a bulging bride!” (Slice n.d.), so she asks for help. She is surprised by the *Dream Team* – one female ‘nutrition specialist’, Nadeen Boman, and one male personal trainer, Tom Europe, who then show her what she has been doing wrong concerning her diet and exercise, and coach her for six weeks until her wedding day. The show ends with the happy bride fitting in – literally into her dress and metaphorically into her new life as a married woman.

The structure of the show is the same in each episode: the bride is introduced, her problems are shown, and her family and her husband are interviewed. After being

shown while trying on her dress and stressing the fact that it does not fit and she feels awful, she is surprised by the experts, who offer to help and change her life. The experts take her to a special set, the so-called ‘aisle of shame’, in which her ‘bad’ eating habits and food choices are exhibited. She then goes through six weeks of rigorous diet and exercise plans. Throughout the process of change the bride’s life and the ‘struggle’ for her great goal are shown. After these six weeks, she is presented as the beautiful bride, who can start her life as a married woman happily and without worries (because she was beautiful on her wedding day). There is a noticeable sexual dimension in this show; only through conforming to heterosexual interactions and gender norms (as in marriage) can the candidate take control and prove her success (Bignell 2004: 201).

The show was not renewed after one season. Nevertheless, it poses an interesting object for analysis due to the many dimensions of ideologies and gender norms that are portrayed, as well as for the aforementioned sexual dimension.

4.2.3. *My Big Fat Revenge*

The show *My Big Fat Revenge* was produced by the production company Eyeworks USA in 2013 and was aired on the television channel *Oxygen* in the same year. It also aired on the channel *Slice* in Canada. Until now, one season with eight episodes has been produced.

In each one of the approximately 45 minutes long episodes, two female, ‘fat’ participants are presented. The stories of the two participants are told at the same time by cross editing, which creates a setting that illustrates differences and similarities between the two women. They take part in the show to take revenge, and, as Oxygen Media associate Laura Zupkus describes in a press release, Oxygen Media empowers women to lose weight and “take control of their lives” (Zupkus 2013). Over the course of the show, the women explain their reasons for taking part in the show. Usually, they have been humiliated by a male (for example their boyfriend), but from time to time also by a female (in one example a dance instructor); losing weight is proposed as the cure for all their rage and the possibility to achieve happiness and confidence. Apart

from the participant(s), their families and friends are featured and, of course, the person that belittled them because of their weight.

The show takes an “eye for an eye approach”, which in the end gives the people who rejected the participants “a taste of their own medicine” (Zupkus 2013). By, as the TV channel Slice puts it on the show’s website, using their rage positively by changing their lives, “two formerly overweight girls (...) stand up for not only themselves but for the fat girl in all of us” (Slice n.d.). Laura Zupkus with Oxygen Media stresses the fact that it is not only about achieving a thin body, but that “these women will get the ultimate chance to get healthy, change their lives for the better, and teach their former offenders the lesson of a lifetime” (Zupkus 2013). The press release alone shows rather problematic approaches to the topics of gender and weight, as will be described more in depth later on in the analysis chapter.

4.2.4. Amount of Data

The fact that makeover shows in general are structured similarly, even if they deal with slightly different aspects of life, means that it is possible to analyse small samples of data while still being able to gain insight into the overall structures and concepts of the format(s). The shows are typically very dense in terms of meanings and ideologies, which makes it hard to analyse a large number thoroughly. Therefore, my analysis will focus on one episode of each in depth. I will analyse five short scenes thoroughly. By producing a film-protocol (see Faulstich 1976, to be specified later), which states in detail the text, setting, and music, as well as editing of each shot and includes a screenshot, it is possible to concentrate not only on the visual aspects of the show, but furthermore analyse the textual parts of each shot. The five scenes will be the introduction, the middle part and the end part of each show. Furthermore, the opening scene and specific illustrations will be analysed for each format.

Scenes can be defined as chronological shots that make up one narrative part of a movie or show. Sequences are made up of scenes, and pose one part of the overall plot. (Heyes

2012 in Screenwriting Science 2008-2015².) Scenes and sequences are thus similar in meaning. Although the introductory opening part of the show is in itself a sequence, it will be analysed as one scene (and thus be referred to as a ‘scene’) of the shows as I will concentrate on the flow of shots in this particular part.

The chosen scenes represent key-moments that emphasise and illustrate the staging methods of each particular show. By selecting scenes that bear resemblance to one another, it is possible to clarify the similarity between makeover shows concerning the general structure and at the same time illustrate differences in staging and the overall perspective on the candidates. The opening scene as the first part of every television show serves as the initial teaser for the audience, acquainting the viewer with the contents and intentions of the respective format. Introductions (be it of the candidates or the show in general) possess the power to draw the viewer’s attention towards the format by addressing specific contents in a certain way, which is why the introductory sequence is crucial for the analysis. The middle part provides the viewer with a brief recap of the previous occurrences and acts as a transition towards the end part, which is an essential part of every makeover show. The revelation of the candidate’s new body concludes her transformation and ultimately acts as the opening for the passage into her new life. Illustrations commonly consist of strong images that are embedded in important scenes throughout the episodes. These once more illustrate the differences and similarities between the shows, which is why they play a decisive role in this analysis.

By concentrating on two formats and one episode each, it is possible to conduct a thorough analysis, which takes into account various components of the show. This would not be possible when analysing a greater number of episodes. The goal of this study is not to give a brief overview of several formats and programmes, but to provide a detailed, in depth analysis of the portrayal of fat, body images, and gender and power relations in makeover shows that can serve as a clarification of how exactly the construction process takes place. By concentrating on two episodes it is furthermore

²<http://screenwritingscience.com/sequence-scene-definitions/> accessed on 27th of April 2015

possible to go into depth by combining several methods as, for example, film-analysis, critical discourse and language analysis, as well as semiotics to be able to analyse more than one layer and to grasp the whole big picture. The short film protocol, which will be shown later on in this chapter, makes it clear that the analysis will be thorough and intensive. Due to the systematic, critical methods, the seemingly small amount of data leads to an extensive analysis and comprehensible results; the scope of data can thus be identified as the preferable, appropriate choice.

It is interesting to focus research on two shows that are presumably different from each other, but are centred on the same ideologies and underlying social as well as power structures. By highlighting that differently staged shows that nevertheless belong to the same type of format in fact focus on the same topics, it can be shown that television programmes produce and transport ideologies – but that this goes unnoticed most of the time (Gray & Lotz 2012: 45).

4.3. Analysing Patriarchal Ideology on TV

As Rosalind Gill (2007) states, the field of gender and media is heterogeneous and therefore there is a plurality of approaches and perspectives. To be able to examine the research questions from different viewpoints and angles and on different layers I will make use of several methods in my analysis. Furthermore, I will take several aspects of the chosen television shows into consideration. Scholars such as Jonathan Gray and Amanda D. Lotz (2012) see television shows as texts; I will analyse those texts in regards to their visual and auditory as well as textual components.

Television programmes as texts shape our beliefs of identities. One important aspect of identity is, clearly, gender – consequently, the programmes influence our idea of what (socially approved) masculinity and what femininity is. Although formal analysis, meaning the analysis of, amongst others, camera and editing techniques, special effects, lighting and sound, is important to uncover how contents are produced, the analysis of the power dimensions within said contents is crucial (Gray & Lotz 2012: 39).

As I aim to uncover power relations in television texts, consequently my approach is critical; also Gray and Lotz (2012: 46) see “any work that examines the construction and depiction of power relations in a text (...) as characteristic of critical, ideological analysis.” I understand critical feminist (television and discourse) analysis as an approach in which the focus lies especially on the hierarchical structures that are portrayed in the medium of television in connection to gender. The analysis is critical as it is aiming to uncover hidden meanings and connections and thereby meant to reveal underlying structures of power and oppression.

The methods I will use are, on the one hand, formal television analysis, introduced by scholars such as Werner Faulstich, Jonathan Gray and Amanda Lotz, which not only provides the tools for a successful further analysis (such as the film protocol) but also examines how the production, arrangement and editing of scenes and shows contribute to the construction of meaning. As producers are able to manipulate contexts not only by using different camera techniques, but also for example through editing (Pruin DeFrancisco & Palczewski 2014: 223), it is furthermore important to pay attention to the formal structures of reality television programmes.

On the other hand, I will use critical discourse analysis for the television text as, for example, explained by Norman Fairclough. To emphasise the visual component and illuminate how meanings are intertwined with images I will take into consideration aspects of semiotics. In addition, language has to be taken into account, because language as an “outgrowth of an ideological system” (Gray & Lotz 2012: 36) not only transports certain ideologies but furthermore is made up of and by societal structures. In other words, language analysis is important because language as a reflection of a social process is itself part of this process; it portrays and produces realities (Fairclough 1989: 22).

I believe that the approach of triangulation of methods (Flick 2006: 306-308), which I will use here, is of importance to understand different aspects of the research problem and to fully grasp the meanings of the chosen sample. Triangulation means the usage of at least two methods in analysing a phenomenon and it is useful to “transcend the

boundaries of both methodological approaches” (Flick 2006: 306). In this case, three methods are used to examine the research problem from different points of view and in regards to different components.

The chosen methods can be seen as complementing and supporting each other in a horizontal system. The formal television analysis concentrates on the objective characteristics of the chosen scenes, while the semiotic analysis deals with the hidden meanings that are conveyed through certain imaging and staging techniques. The method of critical discourse analysis will then serve as a critical approach to the contents as well as the underlying ideologies and power structures that maintain hierarchical structures.

These methods can be seen as contributing to one another and supporting each other in a horizontal way, which is why they are presented in that order – from the more formal method, posing the basis for analysing television texts, towards the more critical, content-related discourse analysis. They deal with different aspects of the chosen medium but at the same time paint a bigger picture of all the components. In the next subchapters, I will introduce and explain the different methods and techniques and how they will be applied in the context of this analysis

4.3.1. Formal Television Analysis and Film Protocol

According to Jonathan Bignell (2009: 18), television studies play a big role in the social sciences due to the fact that television is an important medium for the production and distribution of values and norms. It can be seen as a platform that “represents and affects the social order” (Bignell 2004: 20), meaning that by thoroughly studying the programmes in regards to their use of image and sound the structures of the production of said norms and values can be made visible. The respective scenes in this study will thus be analysed in regards to staging and production with an emphasis on images as well as sound.

Werner Faulstich (1976: 21) states that it is essential to take into consideration at least the following five fields of analysis: the language of film, the contents, the production and distribution, cinema, and reception. In this case, the fields of cinema and reception as well as distribution will not be considered. Although Faulstich's studies refer to film analysis, they are also applicable and useful in terms of television analysis. He argues that films (and in this case, also television programmes) contain statements and therefore mean something; in short, that television contents can be understood in the same way as verbal products. Television portrays certain contents in certain ways, and depending on how it contents are portrayed, the meaning can change. (Faulstich 1976: 23.)

Jeremy G. Butler (1994: 111-188) considers a textual analysis to be important, which includes lighting, camera work, framing, camera height and angle, style and editing as well as sound and music. The formal analysis of TV is, indeed, crucial to the understanding of the entire television system, which in turn leads to an understanding of the dominant ideologies. The critical analysis of television as a space where ideology and power (including power relations) become visible is a political approach that is targeted at uncovering and understanding how power structures work. (Gray & Lotz 2012: 41.)

The assumption that film, contrary to a literary text, is communication on the visual and auditory level makes it crucial to analyse both. (Faulstich 1976: 32) As visual contents are in movement and not always readily available, Faulstich suggests to produce a so-called film protocol ('Filmprotokoll', see figure I). This ensures that every single picture or shot can be recognised and analysed and that all the other components of the scene can be taken into consideration (such as voice-overs, music, lighting and so on). He suggests a film-protocol with five categories. (Faulstich 1976: 44.)

Figure I shows a film-protocol according to Faulstich (1976), which is adapted to the needs of this study. It will consist of eight categories, five of which have been suggested by Faulstich: take number, camera angle, contents, dialogue/spoken text and music. The additional three: framing, sound and a screenshot of the image, I have added myself to

enable a detailed observation. I chose more than the five categories Faulstich suggested, one reason simply being the possibility of inserting screenshots due to the digital nature of the scenes and the thesis, which facilitates a better understanding and enables the reader to visualise the specific shots. Furthermore, text-inserts can be displayed that play a crucial role in the shows, as will be explained later on in the analysis.

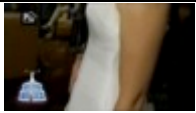



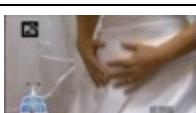

Take	Framing	Camera Angle	Screenshot	Sound	Contents	Spoken Text	Music
1	medium close-up	high angle		voice-over, music	Woman in wedding dress touches her stomach	Every woman wants to look	optimistic, drums, instrumental
2	medium close-up	straight level		voice-over, music	she wobbles her naked arm	stunning on her wedding day	optimistic, drums, instrumental
3	medium close-up	straight level		voice-over, music	she pinches her 'belly fat'	now	optimistic, drums, instrumental
4	close-up	straight level		voice-over, music	another person (supposedly woman) pinches the woman in the wedding dress	help is on the way	optimistic, drums, instrumental
5	medium close-up	straight level		voice-over, music	the woman in the wedding dress touches her stomach	for bulging	optimistic, drums, instrumental
6	medium shot	straight level		voice-over, music	a woman walks through the picture and pulls up her dress	brides	optimistic, drums, instrumental

Figure 1 Example of a film-protocol for a 7 seconds scene from a teaser to *Bulging Brides*³

³ Slice on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwI3a_xtq8k

4.3.2. Semiotics

Basically, semiotics can be seen as the science of signs (Shank 2008: 807). Television programmes, as well as texts, are made up of signs that transfer meaning in the particular medium. Scholars such as Bignell suggest that television has a 'language' that producers learn to use and audiences learn to understand. There are two components to television: it makes use of audio (for example music, voice-overs) as well as video (such as the images seen on screen). Although television is two-dimensional, it resembles the three dimensional world. (Bignell 2004: 86.)

In semiotics, signs that resemble the object they stand for, are called iconic signs. In contrast, a sign that has a 'learned', arbitrary meaning (such as the word 'dog' for that particular animal), is referred to as a symbolic sign. Television images can therefore be seen as iconic signs, as the portrayed images resemble the objects they represent. Very rarely though do signs only represent an object as signs are produced and used in contexts (for example a society). There are two meanings attached to a sign: for one, the denotation, which means the representation of what you can see, and a connotation, which can be described as a 'meta' layer, referring to the ideas that are connected to the sign. This concerns 'real' objects such as animals, but is true also for concepts of thought and more abstract objects. The denotation of the word and the colour pink, is, in the end, a shade of colour (which, however, does not mean that we perceive it in the same way); the connotation could be for example female, girl, feminine, etc. – a learned connotation to this specific colour. Apart from being produced in a cultural context, connotations are also influenced by specific codes and rules of television making. News reporters, for example, are connoted with an aura of professionalism – not necessarily, because the reporters themselves are, but because the particular way of presenting news, newsrooms, their clothes etc. imply professionalism and credibility. (Bignell 2004: 87-88.)

Television programmes are produced along the lines of certain codes, which, according to Bignell (2004), can be seen as a system of rules of how signs can be used and how meanings are created. The fact that signs and meanings are not naturally connected is crucial for the study of (television) texts. Furthermore, it is important to note that

nothing is simply an image of something but that everything carries connotations (albeit subtle, but nevertheless existent). As Bignell (2004: 89) states “television relies on its viewers’ often unconscious knowledge of codes and their ability to decode signs and their connotations, and assemble them into meaningful scenes, sequences and stories”. In the case of television, these codes also refer to methods of shooting and production. It is not only important what is shown, but also how (which angle, which shot etc.) – distance shots or close-ups, for example, convey distinctive meanings, as will be explained later.

Certain genres, meaning certain types of programmes, such as the makeover show have their own set of codes, for example concerning close-ups or long shots (‘framing’), camera angle or camera height. The structural features also play a role in the system of codes; many makeover shows follow a structure of “binary opposition” (Bignell 2004: 90), which becomes visible in the comparison of the ‘before’- and ‘after’-bodies of the candidates.

Although images naturally play an important role in the analysis of television programmes, the audio and sound part should not be left aside. The title sequence – the introductory or opening part of a show - is often accompanied by distinctive music, which can carry various meanings. Amongst others, title sequences are meant to separate the show from other shows and make it recognisable.

4.3.3. Critical Discourse Analysis

It is practical to attempt a definition of what the term ‘discourse’ means and how different approaches deal with this concept, before trying to attempt a definition of the field of critical discourse analysis. Norman Fairclough (1989) views discourse as social practice and a process of social interaction. He explains discourse as a site where relations of power are actually exercised and stresses the hidden power of the discourse of the mass media. Furthermore, the discourse in mass media is interesting because “the nature of the power relations enacted in it is often not clear, and there are reasons for seeing it as involving hidden relations of power” (Fairclough 1989: 49).

Rosalind Gill, who uses the term discourse to refer to all kinds of talk and text, explains that discourse analysis can mean “a huge variety of approaches including critical linguistics and social semiotics” but that it is difficult to give an exact definition as the field is so wide (Gill 2007: 58). In a more general definition, discourse analysis can refer to the “detailed exploration of political, personal, media or academic ‘talk’ or ‘writing’ about a subject, designed to reveal how knowledges are organized, carried and reproduced in particular ways and through particular institutional practices” (Muncie 2006: 75).

As Phillips and Jørgenson (2002: 61) state, discourse does not only refer to spoken language or written texts, but furthermore to visual images. Therefore, discourse analysis not only deals with written or spoken language, but also sees visual images and non-verbal communication as meaningful (Fairclough 1990: 54). It can be seen as derived from linguistics, semiotics and cultural theory and it is a mainly qualitative method of ‘reading’ texts, which examines the relations of language, communication, knowledge, power and social practices (Muncie 2006: 75).

As stated earlier, there are differences in the notion of power. Power can be seen as a “top-down phenomenon” (Gill 2007: 61), but it can also be conceptualised by imagining it as a sort of grid or net that runs through society. This understanding means that power works in all levels of society and disciplines its members by regulating every aspect of life. (Gill 2007: 63.) Relationships of power and power structures are most often invisible (not only) to the ones involved in them. In the case of gender hierarchies in the sense of power relationships, all humans are more or less involved; this invisibility perpetuates these relations and sustains them.

Whereas discourse analysis deals with the multitude of acts that can potentially be defined as discourses, critical discourse analysis “aims to reveal the role of discursive practice in the maintenance of the social world, including those social relations that involve unequal relations of power”(Phillips & Jørgenson 2002: 63). Critical discourse analysis is meant to uncover these structures as these relationships of power in turn shape practices of power, which are entrenched in societies and constitute them

(Fairclough 1990: 54). In the field of critical discourse analysis, it is argued that discursive practices play a role in producing and reproducing unequal power relations (for example between the genders). Critical discourse analysis intends to provoke a change towards more equality in power dynamics and thus society. (Phillips & Jørgenson 2002: 63-64.)

Language analysis is of interest for this thesis due to the fact that language is subject to social convention and plays an important role in the constitution of a society. Therefore, language use can be seen as a social practice (Fairclough 1989: 24) and as a system of power (Gray & Lotz 2012: 36). As Fairclough (1990: 27) emphasises, critical linguistics concentrate on the choice of words and expressions in texts in regards to categorisation. The way in which feminine or masculine individuals are referred to (in fact, the categorisation of man and woman alone can be seen as an act of producing meaning) assigns a place in society and thereby a place in a powerful ideological system of categorisation. There are connections between the use of language and the existence and exercise of power that may not always be visible but are nevertheless crucial for the process of power and are therefore to be analysed critically.

Critical discourse and language analysis are crucial for a critical feminist analysis of all kinds of text. Due to the fact that television contents consist of visual and textual components that can both be seen as discursive practices, and because a critical feminist approach aims for more equality in society, critical discourse analysis proves to be a substantial method for this thesis.

4.4. Validity / Ethics

There are difficulties when it comes to the validity of qualitative research in any case. However, the answers that are found in research do not claim to be the truth or the only answers, but are rather “interpretations arising from an analysis” (Järviluoma, Moisala & Vilkkio 2003: 19) that are to be open to criticism. Furthermore, research is always influenced by dominant ideologies and, as Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2014: 29) argue, results of research are acknowledged as facts if they adhere to prime

ideological beliefs in a culture. A thesis like this one, which explores a phenomenon from a point of view that differs from the predominant one, that might see the thin ideal of women merely as an ideal of beauty, is always subject to critique as it poses a problematized discussion from a perspective that has yet to become commonly accepted (if ever).

Although I will focus on objectivity as much as possible, it has to be kept in mind that a researcher can never be fully objective; even what claims to be a neutral description is shaped by the researcher's interpretation and experiences. In this case, due to the fact that the researcher herself belongs to a gender category, it is important to attempt a positioning in the gender system but at the same time a dissociation from the specific category to try and keep the research objective and to prevent the naturalisation of gender. The researcher's reality becomes embedded in the research material; this is visible amongst others in the decision about what specific sequences or scenes are chosen for the in-depth analysis, what text is transcribed, which parts are highlighted etc. (Järviluoma et al. 2003: 19). Although the shows should (and will) be regarded as products and treated objectively, the difficulty remains, as Norman Fairclough (1989: 27) states, that "analysts cannot prevent themselves engaging with human products in a human, and therefore interpretative, way".

Critical analysis tries to uncover deeper meanings and connect these to societal structures and relations of power, which, in itself, is a process that cannot happen without subjectivity as the researcher herself is part of the system. Nevertheless, neutrality in terms of unbiased opinions should be an important guideline to lead to an understanding of the texts (in this case, the shows) and how they are embedded in and contribute to a network of power (Gray & Lotz 2012: 46).

Interestingly, the choice of research methods itself can be understood as inherently gendered. As Ann Oakley (2000; in Järviluoma et al. 2003: 23) claims, the 'soft' qualitative methods are traditionally seen as feminine in contrast to quantitative methods that deal with 'hard' facts. There is a gendering of methodology (ibid: 24), and by using a methodology, structures of gendered knowledge and research are reinforced.

However, as Järviluoma, Moisala and Vilkkö (2003: 24) argue, it can be necessary to use qualitative methods because they pose the only possible method to analyse a certain research problem. It is necessary to address questions of gender and gendering (such as the gendering of knowledge and research) on each and every level of society and human interaction, as there is no gender-free sphere.

The research is thus always embedded in the system of gender, and no matter how objective one attempts to be, there will always be a gender component, even in the mere analysis of a phenomenon due to the gendered attributes ascribed to the qualitative methodologies.

This view is important when it comes to ethical use of language. As stated before, not only do I myself belong to the gendered society and act in a specific gender category, but also the research method itself speaks of a gendered system. The language I use is shaped by these prepositions; it can thus never be neutral as it has attributes and values ascribed to it. It is necessary to attempt a gender-neutral language free of discrimination, which is why I will use gender-neutral language and try not to reproduce male centrality and gender stereotypes as well as prejudices. Furthermore, as explained earlier, I use the adjective 'fat' to describe people of size to reclaim the formerly negatively connoted word and attach positive, or at least neutral, value to it. As language reflects and structures society, it is important to attempt to use language in a critical, considerate way.

The small scale of data and the aforementioned difficulties of objectivity mean that the range of validity is, similar to many qualitative studies, rather limited; this does not mean, however, that the study will not be of use for further academic research. This study does not claim to be generalizable, but rather to provide a case study of how power and ideology are produced and re-produced in exactly these two shows.

The structure of different shows throughout the genre of makeover shows is, although diverse, very similar, as the overall narrative does not differ from format to format (see for example Weber 2009: 3-4). Therefore, analysing a small number of shows thoroughly contributes to the overall research concerning media contents dealing with

makeover narratives. Due to the fact that the shows that have been chosen for this thesis are exemplary for the genre of makeover shows by being structured so similarly (or the same) throughout the episodes and seasons, this study can be of use for other research concentrating on this topic. It is exactly the similarity in the structure of the shows which makes it possible to compare the results of this study to the results of other studies, meaning that research I am undertaking can be of use to further research in this area of study and the results can be of general validity.

The protagonists and other participants of the chosen shows have already agreed to be objects of critical evaluation and they have given consent to be featured on a publicly available show. In regards to ethics, this means that the question of ethics itself does not have to be considered further in this case. However, I do not mean to shame the participants by any means and will attempt to analyse the shows as neutral and non-discriminating as possible in regards to their bodies and portrayal; this is also connected to the use of neutral language, as stated above.

It is important to state that this thesis is, in a way, a critical study and can be seen as a politicised piece as I aim to uncover power structures and hierarchical inequalities. Even though I attempt to keep the language, analysis and research as neutral as possible, the use of critical analysis techniques means that there is a critical component aimed at social change that must not and cannot be concealed. This thesis can be seen as having an emancipatory component and interest (see Habermas 1968), thus aiming for a critical discussion of media representations and their importance for and impact on societal structures and relationships of power.

5. Analysis

Television contents such as makeover shows can be seen as texts. In contrast to literary texts, television texts consist of several layers (sound, image, contents) that have to be taken into consideration. In this analysis, I will examine television texts in regard to their visual, auditory and textual components.

Formal television analysis (Faulstich 1976; Grey & Lotz 2012) is useful to determine how contents are produced. However, the semiotic components of different visual techniques should also be taken into account as they construct and influence the message that is being conveyed through an image. This means that no matter how unintentional a production technique, sound effect, visualisation or setting might appear, it always produces and transports meanings. For the analysis of the textual components the method of critical discourse analysis will be used, as contents have to be examined closely and critically to reveal the social and hierarchical structures in regards to gender they convey.

When analysing the visual components of television texts, it is important to pay attention to camera techniques, such as camera height, angle, shot length and lighting, as well as possible texts that are inserted into the picture, for example as additional information regarding the image shown. Especially camera height and shot sizes can be used to portray different contents and transport certain meanings (see for example Bignell 2004) and establish certain moods and emotional components. Furthermore, sound is important, as it works in a more subtle way than a concrete image to a certain degree and thus contributes to the overall mood and meaning in a certain scene. The analysis of these – sometimes, but not always – subtly used techniques falls into the area of semiotics because they are learned signs and their meanings and connotations differ from time to time and situation to situation (Bignell 2004: 90).

As television contents are moving images and not as readily available as for example literary texts, I have produced a film protocol for each short scene (see appendices). The protocols display the camera angle, shot size, contents, dialogue and music/sound, as well as a screenshot of each shot. Thus, they do not only provide an overview of all the

shots, sounds, camera angles, inserts etc., but also facilitate the understanding of the overall structure of every show, as the production techniques and outcomes can easily be compared. Furthermore, the film protocols make it possible to trace the steps of the process and thus secure, as far as possible, an objective analysis. In some cases, where it was not practical to produce a film protocol for example due to the varying length of the scenes, screenshots display the crucial images.

In this chapter, I will first give a brief description of the overall structure of every episode of *Bulging Brides*, to then turn to the contents of the one episode in question. Following this, I will give an overview of the short scenes I have chosen and explain why especially these five scenes reflect the meanings conveyed in the show. In the next step, I will describe and analyse every chosen scene. After that, I will proceed in the same way with an episode of *My Big Fat Revenge*, as well as five short scenes from the show. This chapter will end with a short summary and conclusion.

5.1. *Bulging Brides* Season 1 Episode 8: Just Harried

All the episodes in the first season of *Bulging Brides* are very similar in structure and setting, which is why I chose the episode eight from the first season as an example. One bride is featured per episode. After being shown while trying on her dress (and not fitting into it properly), the bride is surprised by coaches Tommy and Nadeen, who make her promise to stick to the fitness and diet plans to be able to be ‘ready’ for the wedding six weeks later. She receives a food diary and is ‘admitted’ to the programme right away – there is no possibility to turn back. The first step is the so-called *Aisle of Shame*. The bride and diet coach Nadeen are shown in a corridor-like studio, which features bar tables full of the meals the bride used to eat. Nadeen then illustrates the bride’s ‘bad’ eating habits, telling her exactly how many calories each of the dishes contains, mocking and criticising the bride as they walk down the aisle from table to table. The bride is shown a number of times in a close-up, portraying her emotions of shame, guilt and disgust towards herself.

After this rather embarrassing event, the bride and Nadeen proceed to the first weigh-in, called the *Shape Analysis*, where Tommy is waiting for them. The coaches now assess the bride's body and she is measured (bust – waist – hips) and then weighed. Although some of the brides are not fat or 'overweight' by medical definition (for example regarding their BMI⁴), each one of them is terrified to learn their measurements and weight. After that, the bride is asked to look at a screen, on which her body – dressed in black underwear – can be seen next to facts and figures (measurements, height, weight, dress size, body type), slowly turning as to allow for assessment from all sides. Also in this case, the bride is normally terrified by her 'awful', disgusting body, and once again agrees to do everything that is necessary to change it.

The episode goes on with the first fitting of the dress. A seamstress helps the participant into her dress, which is too small, to then ask her to stand in front of a mirror together with her coaches and pinch and squeeze her body wherever it does not fit into the dress. Coach Tommy then goes on to pinch her body wherever he thinks she should be more toned. Through all of this, the bride stands still and waits passively for the coaches to tell her what to do; if she has any emotions whatsoever, they are directed against herself and her 'disgusting' body. After this, the coaches ask her if she wants to dedicate the next six weeks to losing weight, if she is going to stick to her meal plans and follow whatever rules the coaches set out for her to achieve her goal. She naturally she answers with "I do" and her exercise routine starts immediately.

The next scene shows the bride's body on a screen once more, this time in comparison to her dress (without anyone 'inside'). Both of the figures are rotating, while numbers and comments are shown to illustrate how much the bride weighs, what her 'problem' body parts are and how they are going to be improved. After a short statement of the bride, she is shown during her 'physical' assessment, which can also be seen as a rather embarrassing experience as the bride is usually not very active and Coach Tommy uses strong language to 'motivate' her.

⁴ BMI: Body Mass Index – measurement used to determine whether a person is 'over'weight on the basis of the weight to height ratio.

After this, it is time for the so-called *Kitchen Purge*. Coach Nadeen visits the bride's home to tell her what is 'bad' and what is 'good' in terms of food to then tell the bride what she is allowed to eat from now on, which is usually very little – about 1500 calories (the normal amount for an average person being about 2000 calories per day). The bride is then shown at her stagett-party, in which she normally does not stick to her vows; subsequently, she and her friends have to 'pay the price' in an extra-hard workout with Tommy the next morning.

The next step is the *Mid Point Weigh-In*. Apparently, three weeks have past since the beginning of the show, and the bride's body is assessed once again – she is weighed, her body is measured and she tries on the dress again. Also in this case, neither is the bride nor are the coaches normally satisfied with her body, so subsequently the bride's body is pinched and she is criticised again for not losing enough weight. Along with feelings of guilt, the bride promises to try harder, and the coaches increase her fitness programme.

The show slowly proceeds towards the 'happy ending' part. After a partner-challenge, which consists of the bride and the soon-to-be husband having to go through some sort of test, for example physical activity, together, the bride is asked to come to the *Final Weigh-In* – the 'judgement day', as one coach voices it. At this point, she is measured again, her weight is assessed, and normally she is very happy because she managed to lose some pounds and inches. She is then allowed to try on her wedding dress together with her family. After receiving compliments and congratulations, she is deemed 'ready for her wedding/marriage' and the programme ends. The episode ends with pictures of the wedding (representing the 'after' pictures), and a comment by the bride that she feels so much better – this ending is very typical for makeover shows.

As stated before, I selected the eighth episode of the first season of *Bulging Brides* that features the participant Sarah Johnson. She is 26 years old and has two children with her soon-to-be husband. Judging by BMI-standards, Sarah is not outside the standard weight range, weighing 139 pounds (about 63 kg) at a height of 5'4' (about 162 cm), making her BMI 24 which is in the normal range. However, her dress is too small. She

claims that it fit when she bought it a couple of months ago and that it is a size eight (which she says she actually is), so now she has to lose weight in order to be a beautiful bride and ready for the wedding.

I will analyse the following scenes in this episode to depict the different techniques (such as camera angles, shots, sounds, subtle meanings and connotations as well as non-subtle statements) that the show uses to imply guilt, shame, and an overall very complex idea of women, weight, and marriage: 1) Title scene, 2) *The Aisle of Shame*, 3) *Future Vision*, 4) Final fitting of the dress, 5) Illustrations/Graphics. The first four scenes are noted down in film protocols in the appendices whereas the last scene can be seen as an overview of techniques used to measure and classify her body and is illustrated by screenshots in the text. The analysis of the scenes does not proceed in chronological order as the illustrations appear at the beginning as well as the end of the episode, but the results are presented in this way to facilitate an overview and general understanding of the show's structure.

I have chosen these scenes because they are exemplary for the production process and the show's structure; they appear in each episode (albeit with different protagonists) and can thus be seen as a standard design for this specific format. The *Aisle of Shame*-scene is specifically connected to the show *Bulging Brides* and therefore crucial for the analysis due to certain implications concerning marriage and wedding. Especially the title scene, the future vision as well as the final fitting of the dress, which represents the 'after'-scene in makeover shows, and the illustrations are typical elements of the format of makeover shows. Therefore, examining these scenes makes it possible to expand the results of the analysis to other episodes, different makeover shows and further research.

5.1.1. Scene 1 – Opening Scene

The opening scene, which is about eighteen seconds long, is shown about two minutes into the show, following a short overview of the show's contents and the partly introduction of this show's candidate. This scene is a partly animated comic-style introduction into the show, mixed with real images of a bride and the judges Nadeen

and Tommy. It consists of eight shots; all of them are rather short and the overall scene is edited in a quick, dynamic way. The colour scheme is purple and white, with text-additions in light colours such as blue, yellow and red. The music, a Mexican inspired instrumental background music that creates a dynamic, happy atmosphere and an overall positive, active feeling, is consistent. The scene's shots are mostly close-ups and medium long shots that give an overview as well as details of the specific shot. As there is no spoken text at all, on-screen text, which will be analysed in the following, gives an idea of what the show is about. Furthermore, powerful images are used to make it clear what the viewer is about to see.

The first two three shots deal with food that is portrayed as a temptation – it is made sure that the viewer understands this by portraying the word 'temptation' in capital letters next to the close-up of a woman with a veil (read: bride) in the first shot and by showing her surrounded by food that she is reaching for in the second shot. In the following shot different 'temptations' that a bride might face, such as 'showers', 'tastings', 'cocktails' and 'buffets' appear with the words being shown in capital letters and bright, shiny colours. The next two shots can be seen as the 'result' of a bride giving in to these temptations. She is shown in a medium long shot (from head to knee) from the side and from the front. When she is shown from the side, her behind 'bulges', which is emphasised by an explosion sound; at the same time, the text 'battle the bulges' appears (again in capital letters). The next shot shows her from the front with her hips 'bulging' which is once again emphasised by the sound of an explosion and commented on screen with the text 'combat the calories' in capital letters. The next three shots show a 'solution' to the bride's problems. The coaches appear on screen in interesting poses – Nadeen is shown kicking the air and Tommy is pointing at the camera; both seem very ambitious. The sign 'bridal bootcamp' and the text 'gorging to gorgeous' (both in capital letters) let the viewer know what is going to happen in the show. The next shot shows the bride lifting weights while the text 'in 6 weeks' in capital letters appears, with the number six spinning around itself. The last shot shows a drawing of a shape that can be identified and interpreted as the shape a wedding cake commonly has. There is a bride lifting weights on top of it and the name of the show 'Bulging Brides' in capital letters on the front, with the 'I' being the tongue of a scale,

thus making the whole wedding cake resemble a scale. In the first part of the shot, the tongue points to the right, indicating a high weight and the bride on top of the cake is fat. The tongue gradually moves to the middle, then to the left, indicating a weight loss during the course of which the bride on the cake becomes slimmer. The music comes to an end and the show begins.

The music and the overall colour scheme is happy and positive, symbolising a new beginning and positive outlook on the topic of weight loss. Although there is no narrator, there is a story that is told through the on-screen texts: brides face temptation through showers, buffets etc., resulting in the need to battle the bulges and combat the calories, which can be achieved by obeying the coaches and attending the bridal bootcamp. This will take the bride from gorging to gorgeous in six weeks through the weight loss. However, the actions that are necessary for this are not shown, which makes it seem as if it is possible to turn the body into a better one (symbolised by the spinning number six) in a few weeks without much effort.

The idea of food as a temptation is very common in relation to women. Women who eat a lot give in to a temptation, which has consequences (in this case depicted by the ‘bulging’ body parts). Thus, there are more meanings to food than commonly understood: in this case, it is a temptation that the bride has to resist – otherwise she has to attend a bootcamp and battle her body to be able to be a bride.

The sound effects (explosions) that are used turn the bride’s body into a thing (because persons normally do not explode) that is out of control and breaks its boundaries by giving into temptation and consuming more than it is supposed to. As stated in the theoretical part of this thesis this is a problematic, but common requirement for women: they are not only required to hold themselves back (and not give in into temptations) but also to stay within their assigned place and space and not take up more space than they are allowed to by breaking their boundaries. The opening scene provides the bridal bootcamp and the battle against ‘the bulge’ as ways to work on self-control and stop the body from taking up space it is not supposed to.

The last shot is interesting as it plays with symbols and relies on the audience's ability to decode certain forms and attach meanings. The form can only be identified as a wedding cake because wedding cakes tend to look like this in a wedding in (most) of the Western society – at least two layers of cake topped with figures of the bride and groom. The 'I' of the word 'brides' can be identified as the tongue of a scale because of the connection that can be made between the tongue/letter pointing to the right, indicating a high weight (again, something that is learned) illustrated by the overweight 'topper on the cake' and the figure slimming down and the letter/tongue pointing to the left, indicating a lower weight. Women, some of them soon-to-be brides, are the audience this show is directed at – many of them spend a great deal of their time dieting or dealing with their bodies and weight which makes it clear why these specific symbols are used. Any woman who has spent a good time of her life dieting and watching her weight knows what a tongue of a scale looks like and what side it should point to. Furthermore, the part of the female audience that is a (soon-to-be) bride can identify the shape as a wedding cake and make the connection that a slim bride is the requirement for a perfect wedding and thus a successful marriage.

In summary, it can be stated that this scene works with symbols that the audience the show is directed at knows how to interpret, which makes it powerful, as the meanings are not said out loud, but rather implied (sometimes not very) subtly through texts, images and symbols. The message is clear: food is a temptation the (soon-to-be) bride has to avoid to be able to slim down and be a proper bride on her wedding day. In addition to that, it is implied that women know what is expected of them on their wedding day – the thin ideal is deeply ingrained into their understanding of their bodies and lives and can thus be identified as a prevalent ideology.

5.1.2. Scene 2 – The Aisle of Shame

This one minute and 30 seconds long scene takes place after the introduction of the candidate and can therefore be seen as the first step along the way. It is narrated by Tommy and features Sarah and Nadeen. It takes place in a studio that is designed in the form of a corridor, with all of Sarah's 'bad' food-choices displayed on tables on one

side. In the course of the scene, Nadeen and Sarah walk from one dish to the next through the corridor set.

The music in this scene is instrumental and serves as background music. There are several sound effects such as trumpets and chicken cackling. The shots in this scene are mostly close-up and medium close-up and long shots that serve to draw the attention to the meals (close-ups) and protagonists (medium close-ups) as well as the overall setting of the scene (medium long shots). The high angle shots of the food on the tables serve as an overview whereas the low-angle shots serve to make the meal appear huge and disproportionate. Similar to the introduction also this scene is characterised by text that appears on the screen, provides information and labels certain meals in a rather blunt way.

Nadeen explains what Sarah eats and how many calories every item of food has, pointing at each component and stressing the amount of food that she obviously regards as huge and abnormal. While Nadeen explains, the food in question is shown in a close-up with the calories being displayed in the lower left corner. After each item has been shown in detail, there is an overview of all the food on the table to visualise the ‘huge’ amount Sarah consumes. Following each dish, a medium-close up depicts Sarah’s reaction to the food.

The visual effects in this scene are rather simple texts that appear on the screen whenever a meal or an item of food is presented. Every meal is assigned a name: *Flab Attack*, *Belly Buster* and *Carb Queen*. After these titles disappear, the amount of calories is shown. While the calories are displayed, there is the sound of a cash register – calories are thus understood as something that can add up to a final bill. It is not stated how much of the food has how many calories or in what amount Sarah consumes the food; except for one table where the viewer is informed that she eats 10 000 calories of sweet desserts every month. This appears to be a large amount, but if we look at the period – one month – in which Sarah consumes the food, it is not much; the show distorts the number of calories by choosing arbitrary periods of time that are normally

not used in relation to calories (it is very rare that calories are counted for one whole month).

This whole scene is characteristic for makeover shows. It serves to install a feeling of shame in the candidate – in this case, even stressed by the title of the scene (*The Aisle of Shame*) that is displayed in the sixth shot. The behaviour of the diet coach Nadeen furthermore contributes to Sarah's feeling of shame and failure: she asks Sarah to explain herself and to guess how many calories the food has and when Sarah gives a wrong answer, Nadeen corrects her in a nearly mocking way and appears to be shocked throughout the scene about the huge amounts Sarah consumes. It is clearly portrayed that this is not a 'normal' amount of food, which is emphasised by adjectives such as 'oversized', 'large' and 'huge'. Furthermore, Sarah's eating habits are labelled as 'bad'; it is not the way she is supposed to eat, which means that it is necessary for Nadeen to shame her into recognising and altering her 'bad' choices.

After having seen the amounts she eats, Sarah claims that she is disgusting, that it is no wonder that she does not fit into her dress and that she has to change – this shows that the feeling of shame that has been installed in the candidate leads to a feeling of guilt and personal failure. Sarah perceives herself as a disgusting person who made the wrong choices and for her, it is clear that it is her own fault and that she is the one who can (and has to) change the situation by changing her eating habits. These statements portray women who eat a lot (and 'unhealthy') as disgusting and abnormal. Furthermore, the common assumption that women are responsible for their looks and body is supported by Sarah stating that she has to change – it is her responsibility to make her body fit the dress and prepare herself for marriage.

This scene is set in a way that corresponds to a wedding theme: walking down the aisle is a very important part of every wedding and should be performed in an elegant way - certainly not as a fat person. The implication is that it is necessary for Sarah to walk down the 'aisle of shame' now to recognise her eating habits so she can then change them to be able to walk down the 'real' aisle and look perfect and be happy. It becomes clear that also in this scene being thin (reflected by the need to make 'better' choices

and stop eating ‘unhealthy’ food) is portrayed as the precondition for being ready for a wedding (and thus marriage), implying that if Sarah were to keep her ‘bad’ eating habits she would not be able to walk down the ‘real’ aisle in a way that would enable her to be a proper bride.

This scene fits well into the overall wedding and marriage theme of the show. By ‘practicing’ certain situations that come up in a ‘real’ wedding (but in this case with the unsuitable body) the candidate is shown what it would be like if she were not to fit into the dress: her walk down the aisle would then resemble a walk down the ‘aisle of shame’. By installing shame and fear into the candidate, she is made to comply with the coaches as to not be an unsuitable, fat bride on her wedding day. Also this scene shows the idea that the candidate has to resist temptations and work on her body to become thin, which is the precondition for a successful wedding and marriage.

Furthermore, it is portrayed that women are not supposed to ‘indulge’ in ‘huge’ amounts of food but rather contain themselves and eat just as much as they need, and not eat for different reasons than to survive. When Nadeen is shocked that Sarah eats two apple cobbles (not just one!) because she feels like she needs a treat it becomes clear that women should not give in to their desires but stay strong and resist their temptations; in other words, exercise a discipline over their body to comply with the thin beauty standard and to have the control over her desires and her body.

5.1.3. Scene 3 – Future Vision

This fifty seconds-long scene takes place around halfway through the show. It is an outlook on the way Sarah’s body could look one year after the wedding. Tommy and Sarah are standing in front of a screen that displays Sarah’s body in black underwear. There are no special effects except for the animation on the display and the music is silent and does not distract from the contents.

Tommy tells Sarah that many brides gain weight. He supports this claim by presenting her what her body could look like on her first anniversary if she does not change her

eating habits. The body on the display becomes fatter and fatter while the display is shown in the split-screen method next to a close-up of Sarah's face. She is visibly shocked and has tears in her eyes. After the body has become fat, Tommy asks Sarah what this feels like and she replies that it is 'disgusting'. Tommy then shows Sarah what her body could look like if she follows the rules the coaches have made for her. The body becomes slimmer and slimmer, and Sarah is happy again; she looks hopeful and motivated. Tommy tells her that she has 'a lot of work to do' to achieve these looks.

Although this scene is quite simple and does not contain any special visual effects other than the animation of the body, the message is clear: a fat body is not desirable; a thin one is. While the other scenes focus on the preconditions for marriage and the time before the wedding, this scene deals with the time after the wedding. By showing Sarah the animation of what her body could look like in one year (about five to seven kilograms heavier) if she does not change her lifestyle, Tommy installs fear into Sarah. She has to put herself into his hands and obey Nadeen's and his rules to be able to avoid this scenario. It is interesting that in this scene it becomes clear that a thin body is not only the precondition for the wedding (day and dress), but furthermore for the whole marriage: the body is supposed to be and stay thin even after the wedding has happened.

Again, it is Sarah's task to make sure that her body does not change into an undesirable one, meaning that she is the one who has to change her eating and fitness habits and stick to the coaches' rules. The coach Tommy on the other hand is the one setting the rules; he has a position of power in this scene. He seemingly controls the displays, as he says the magic words after which Sarah's body turns into a slim one, which means that he is, on a symbolic level, in charge and in control of Sarah's body and with this, her life.

Sarah claiming that her fatter body is 'disgusting' clearly points towards a rejection and devaluation of the (her!) fat body. Furthermore, there is a visible fear of the fat body: it is the worst-case scenario that anyone could imagine and it should be prevented by all means. The fact that seeing her body become thin or fat provokes a strong reaction (laughing or crying respectively) can be seen as a sign that Sarah's body is important for

her mood; she sees her thin body as a precondition for happiness and thus as a prerequisite for a happy, fulfilled marriage.

This scene implies that women have to stay in control of their bodies even after the wedding day, as this is a precondition for a happy life. While the male (coach) sets the rules, it is the woman's task to stick to these rules. She is thus not self-determined but obeys the rules of the dominating gender in the Western society. The body is clearly portrayed as the source and prerequisite for happiness; as soon as the body is slim, life is good. It is the woman's responsibility to make her body thin, meaning that she in the end is responsible for her own happiness – if she chooses to stick to the 'bad' eating habits, she is the one to blame for being unhappy. In connection to marriage, one can argue expresses a woman's responsibility for maintaining a happy marriage meaning that if she does not work on her body she is to blame if the marriage does not work out. It becomes clear that the woman is responsible for her looks and her body and in conclusion can be blamed if the marriage does not work out – in the end, she could have worked harder on herself and be more disciplined to form her body according to the standards set by a (male) counterpart.

To sum it up, this scene shows that the blame is on the female candidate – she has to maintain her slim body to make the marriage work. She is to blame if she is unhappy (and, in conclusion, also her husband) and it is her responsibility not to lose control over her body, but to stick to the preconditions for a female in order to succeed in society: discipline, containment and obedience.

5.1.4. Scene 4 – Final Fitting of the Dress

This one minute and ten seconds long scene takes place at the end of the episode. The setting of the scene is inspired by a typical changing room in a bridal wear shop featuring white carpets, a mirror and thick curtains. Apart from the first shot, which is a close-up of a display showing Sarah's weight, the whole scene takes place in the aforementioned setting. There are no special (sound or editing) effects and the music is quiet, serving as silent background music. The shots are mainly close-ups that are meant

to draw attention to the emotions of the candidate and her family by showing their faces and medium long shots that present the setting of the scene.

The scene begins with a shot of a display that shows Sarah's 'after'-weight. In a way, this shot is the introduction to the end part of the episode, leading to the presentation of her 'after'-body in contrast to the undesirable 'before'-body. The following medium long shot from a high angle in the dressing room showing Sarah and the seamstress bears resemblance to the mirror scene, which is typical for makeover shows, as Sarah is standing in front of a mirror admiring her new self. A number of close-up shots show the process of getting dressed with ease – a parallel to the first fitting of the dress, in which the process had been depicted as more challenging. After this, her new body is revealed to the audience (her family) by the coaches, who open the curtain for her so that she can take a step into her new life. Her family awaits her excitedly and watches while the seamstress explains where Sarah lost weight and how nicely the dress fits her now. The family comments with appropriately excited and admiring 'oohs' and 'aahs' and the mood is very emotional. In the following, the coaches comment on Sarah's hard work and Tommy states that Sarah is 'ready to stroll down the aisle'. The coaches and Sarah hug and say their goodbyes. In the end, Sarah smiles and concludes that she is happy and proud of herself and feels good.

This scene represents a typical element of makeover shows as it reveals the 'finished' result (read: the participants 'new' body) and can be understood as the beginning of her new life. In this case, the setting is slightly different than in other shows. Instead of only being revealed to herself in front of a mirror, the bride is showcased to her surprised, proud family. The candidate is presented as a product of 'hard work', as the coach states. Similar to other makeover shows, the candidate is now 'ready' for her new life – in this case, the (male) coach deems her ready to 'stroll down the aisle', in other words, ready for the wedding and marriage.

The candidate's achievement and suitability for her new life is thus expressed through the fitting of the dress and the fitting into the dress – the dress fits which means she worked hard enough to reach her goals. Although the coach states that the family is

there to see the results of ‘hard work’, he does not specify this hard work in this scene in any way. Neither the family nor the candidate acknowledge the six weeks of exercise, dieting, self-shaming and discipline, which creates the illusion that it has been relatively easy for the candidate to achieve her looks. The family comments on her beauty, but not in any way on her (supposed) health or strength that would come with exercise, meaning that the emphasis lies solely on the candidate’s body and how it looks in the dress. However, the candidate herself claims that she did not participate to lose weight or inches, but to be comfortable in her own skin again – a claim that is not necessarily supported by the scene’s fixation on the dress.

The coach’s statement that the candidate is, in his opinion, ‘ready to stroll down the aisle’ is interesting on several layers. First of all, it is important to acknowledge that it is the male coach who deems the female candidate ready for the wedding – it is not her choice, but his opinion that sets the rules. Throughout history, it has been common for men (brothers, fathers, cousins and future husbands) to set the rules for marriage and to decide if and when a woman is ready to marry; on a meta-level, this is what takes place in this scene. The choice of words not only corresponds to the overall wedding terminology of the show, but furthermore establishes a connection to the ‘aisle of shame’ the candidate had to walk before. In the beginning of the show, thus, the soon-to-be bride had only been ready to walk the aisle of shame and was required to abstain from her sins (similar to confessing before a religious wedding) whereas now, she is free from bad habits and beautiful enough to stroll down the real aisle, in other words: desirable and therefore ready for the wedding and, consequently, marriage.

This scene represents a typical element of makeover shows and it corresponds to the overall message of the show: a bride is ready for the wedding and a marriage when she is beautiful and it is the man’s decision when exactly this state has been reached. In other words, he decides when she marries and what she is supposed to look like in this situation – thus he is in control of her body and her life.

5.1.5. Scene 5 – Illustrations and Graphics

There are several interesting info-graphics throughout the episode. The ones I will present in the following are important because they represent typical elements of most, if not all, makeover shows. They are not analysed in chronological order but are presented in this way to make their meanings and implications comprehensible.



These graphics are accompanied by the following text spoken by the male coach: *“In six weeks, we’re gonna tone up Sarah’s flabby upper body, trim the waistline and melt inches off the hips.”*

Figure II Before

This graphic, which is shown in the beginning of the episode, is a typical element of makeover shows. It can be seen as some sort of ‘inventory’ that lists not only the defective body parts but furthermore the steps that have to be taken to convert them into the desired size and shape. Both images, Sarah’s body and the wedding dress, rotate, enabling observation and judgement by the viewer. Her measurements are shown one by one with her height and weight staying on-screen throughout the four images.

While her measurements are displayed, the male coach comments on the problematic parts of her body and what has to be changed. The expression ‘flabby upper body’ is a derogatory remark about Sarah’s body type – typically, adjectives are not neutral in makeover shows but serve to devalue the participant’s body and emphasise the defective state of the ‘before’-body. The plan of ‘melting inches off the hips’ expresses the idea that the candidate’s body and flesh are objects that can be changed to the will of

the coaches – especially the metaphor of melting indicates an object that can be formed and sculptured in a desired way.

The overall tone and choice of words of the sentence implies that the candidate is not the active part in the whole process, but rather the passive one whereas the coaches are the actors who are going to tone up and trim the candidate's body. This view is emphasised by the graphics: the candidate's body is put on a level with the inanimate wedding dress.

The contrasting juxtaposition of Sarah's body in black underwear and the empty white wedding dress can be seen as a symbol for the changes that have to take place before she is able to 'fill' the empty dress and be suitable for the wedding and fulfil her role as a bride and wife. Instead of altering the inanimate object to fit the living body the body has to be altered (by someone else) to fit the dress – again, the common theme of makeover shows in general.



These graphics are accompanied by the following text spoken by the male coach: *"Despite her hectic schedule, Sarah found the time to exercise and eat well. She lost eight pounds and seven inches and will look gorgeous on her wedding day."*

Figure III Before/After

These graphics (Fig. III) are shown towards the end of the show, after Sarah's 'new' body has been revealed to her family and before the pictures of her wedding day are shown. Similar to the aforementioned graphics, these ones once again feature Sarah's body in underwear. This time, however, the wedding dress is not empty, but Sarah is wearing it.

As mentioned before, these graphics are very common in makeover shows. This one is the typical 'before/after' display, with the candidate's body before the alterations on the left and her new body on the right. In this case, three shots feature the candidate's body in underwear, three in the wedding dress. Interestingly, her measurements are shown when her body is displayed in underwear whereas her body weight is displayed together with her wearing the dress. Her body is rotating when shown in the wedding dress, but static when shown in underwear with only the measurements moving from top to bottom and changing according to the body part.

Although the before- and after-pictures are shown side by side, they differ in terms of camera angle. The before-picture is taken from a low to straight view, whereas the after-picture is taken from a higher angle that is commonly used to make bodies appear smaller and thinner than they really are. This allows the assumption that Sarah's weight loss was not big enough (eight pounds/roughly 3,5 kg) to be clearly visible, but that the camera techniques had to be used to emphasise her change by making her appear fatter and thinner before and after respectively.

Contrary to the before-graphics these shots show Sarah in the wedding dress, meaning that the viewer may now assume she is ready for the wedding because she fits into and fills the wedding dress that had been empty in the beginning of the episode. Once again, the male coach comments on the graphics; by stating that she will 'look gorgeous on her wedding day' he confirms the audience's expectations and assumptions and deems her suitable and ready for her wedding and thus marriage.

All in all, the scenes in the show in general and in this episode specifically share a language of shame and guilt. The bride is pictured as not being ready for the wedding

due to her body, which is ‘out of control’; it is her task to change this to be able to fit into her dress (=into her life) and be a suitable wife. Being a wife is thus depicted as being a crucial aspect of a woman’s life – a goal she has to reach by following the rules the coaches set out for her.

5.2. *My Big Fat Revenge* – Season 1 Episode 4: Hillary and Pardis

The show *My Big Fat Revenge* differs from the show *Bulging Brides* due to the fact that being a bride is not understood as being the most important role of a woman. However, in this specific episode the focus lies on relationships and the humiliation the candidates have endured by their (ex-)boyfriends. This points towards the belief in society that a woman has to conform to certain beauty and body standards to be accepted by her male counterpart and to be able to lead a happy, fulfilled life.

Similar to *Bulging Brides* all the episodes of the first season of *My Big Fat Revenge* are structured identically. Therefore, it was possible to choose the fourth episode of the first season randomly, as it is supposed to serve as an example depicting the production and staging that, except for different participants, do not change throughout the season. Each episode of the show features two fat female participants. They have been shamed, hurt, laughed at or mistreated in another way by for example their (ex-)boyfriends, friends or business partners. The show tells the stories of the two women by switching back and forth between the two.

Each personal part begins with the weight of the woman being shown. She then talks about her life as a fat person, her history, how the weight makes her daily personal and love life difficult and what her reasons for participating in this show are. After that, the participant ‘embarks on her journey’, meaning three months of exercise and diet in a not specified place (possibly a clinic). To illustrate this, she is shown packing her bag and getting into a car which takes her into the beginning of her ‘new’ life. The three months are summarised very briefly through some shots that show the candidates exercising and commenting on how exhausting it is, but also on how they plan not to fail and to achieve their goals. After the three months are over, some family members and friends

are interviewed, who comment on what they think or hope has changed with most of them expecting to see a happier and healthier candidate. The car that the candidate boarded in the beginning of her journey is shown once again and while the candidate comments on the journey off-screen only certain parts of her body are shown (hands, feet, legs), as to keep the result hidden from the viewer until a little later. The final revelation scene features family and friends standing outside, waiting for the candidate. When she finally arrives, she is greeted with surprise and excitement; every one is happy to see her and comments on how much better she looks. There is a short comparison of the candidate before and after the weight-loss.

After about half of the runtime the revenge starts. Each candidate went through with the weight loss to take revenge on a person that hurt her when she was still fat – now, after the weight loss is completed, this revenge is executed. The person that the candidate wants to take revenge on is tricked into some kind of embarrassing situation with the intention being to make the person feel as humiliated and hurt as the candidates used to feel when being called names, laughed at or hurt in a different way. After the revenge has taken place, there is a short part in which the future plans of the candidates are discussed. These are normally plans that (apparently) could not have been achieved with a fat body (such as joining the military or running a marathon). The show closes with comments of the candidates that the weight loss was worth it and they would do it again.

There are no judges or hosts but each part of the show is narrated by the respective candidate. She tells about her life, the reasons for being part of the show and what she hopes to achieve. The coaches, although they exist, are not such a big part of the show. They are not mentioned often, but rather stay in the background and appear to be motivating rather than shaming or putting any obvious blame on the respective participant.

As stated before, I selected the fourth episode of the first season, which features Hillary, 24 years, and Pardis, a 22-year-old law-student. After a short summary of the show's contents before the opening scene, the candidates are introduced. Hillary is the first

candidate to be shown in this episode. She weighs 283 pounds and is very unhappy with her weight and body and describes herself as sad. She states that she has been fat for all of her life and has never really been satisfied with her body. Her problems have been visible especially when dating, as all of her (thin) girlfriends used to have boyfriends but she was always the odd one out. When she did find a boyfriend, Alex, he mocked her weight and called her names. They broke up after Alex gave her a ring that was two sizes too small and told her that it would be an engagement ring if she lost enough weight that the ring could fit. Hillary wants to take revenge on her now ex-boyfriend Alex, which is why she participates in the show. She wants to take revenge by setting him up in a scenario that makes him look like a costumer involved in illegal activities. The scene is staged in the following way: he is made to believe that there is a flea market for computer parts, which is then revealed to be illegal and raided by the police. This creates a very uncomfortable situation for Alex, as he has to explain himself as to why he is buying stolen computer parts on an illegal market. With this, she hopes to make him understand how hurt and humiliated she felt when he called her names and mocked her body. In the course of the show, Hillary loses nearly 100 pounds. With her slimmer body, she feels confident enough to confront Alex and tell him her feelings. She destroys the engagement ring to find closure and in the end, she is shown training for the entrance test for the military, which would not have been possible had she not lost the weight.

The second candidate is Pardis. She is a 22-year-old law student from Iran and talks about the Iranian culture and the expectations towards women in the beginning – clearly, she does not fit in because she weighs too much, as she states. Pardis has a boyfriend, Mo, who she has been dating for about five years. They have both gained weight over the course of the relationship. However, Mo now mocks Pardis for her weight and thinks that she will never lose the weight – she should not even try – which is why Pardis wants to take revenge on Mo. Despite his behaviour, she does not want to break up with him, but wants him to experience the same humiliation and feeling of failure that she has experienced. After losing about sixty pounds and presenting her new body to her surprised and happy family, she takes revenge by making Mo introduce a computer programme he designed to a jury. They mock it and hurt his feelings and in

the end, Pardis and Mo get back together, because he (supposedly) realises how much his comments hurt Pardis and how much they love each other. Pardis is shown talking to the coach at some point in the episode, which is the only time the coach is mentioned. He is rather friendly and supportive and tells her that she is strong and will find her way. In the end, Pardis is shown training for and running a 5k-race – she has achieved what she wanted and is happy with her new body and new life.

For both participants one thing is clear: the show's 'weight loss journey' they went on has changed their life for the better and totally transformed them. After taking revenge, they are now able to live a better life and move on; they want to keep up the eating habits and never go back to being fat again.

Overall, the show focuses on the revenge rather than the process of losing weight. The candidates are not mocked or judged by coaches or hosts. The design of the show is rather simple and there are no special sound or graphic effects. In the following, I will analyse the following scenes due to their importance: 1) The Opening Scene; 2) Hillary's Story; 3) Pardis's Story and 4) Hillary Before and After. The last part will concentrate on the staging of the before- and after-pictures and graphics. The chosen scenes are of importance due to their contents and/or staging techniques; the before/after scenes as well as the before/after graphics are typical elements of makeover shows. They are therefore crucial for this analysis because they illustrate that *My Big Fat Revenge*, although focusing on said revenge rather than on mere weight-loss, still belongs to the genre of weight-loss makeover shows and uses similar staging techniques. The scenes are not in chronological order but have been presented in this way to facilitate a deeper understanding of the staging and narration process of the show. I have decided to not focus on any revenge scene, as they are not as relevant to the topic of this thesis as the scenes that deal with the participants. Overall, the show can be seen as taking a different approach to the makeover-theme; however, the idea of having to loose weight to lead a satisfied life is prevalent once again.

5.2.1. Scene 1 – Opening Scene

The ten seconds-long opening scene of *My Big Fat Revenge* is shown about two minutes into the show after a short summary and overview of the episode's contents. It is an animation of words and consists of only one shot: words appear on the screen in front of a dark, grey background. The words that are derogatory and insulting nicknames for fat people are spoken out loud and commented on by male and female voices off-screen. They are written in capital letters in a blue, fat, bold font, which makes them appear heavy and strong. There is no music in the beginning, but sound effects (crashing, explosions) that accompany each name as it appears on screen by 'falling' into the picture and crashing into the 'ground' or the name beneath it. In the end, the names form a wall-like structure. The title of the show appears to be falling on top of this 'wall, crashing it, while a female voice comments 'enough is enough. I'm in control now'. The opening scene ends with the title being displayed in front of a yellow background. The words 'MY BIG FAT' are written in capital letters and 'grow' according to their position in the sentence with the word 'FAT' being the largest one. 'REVENGE' is written in yellow capital letters and is positioned under 'MY BIG FAT'.

The opening scene is interesting for a number of reasons, one of them being that it is very visual despite the fact that it is only an animation of words. The derogatory names 'thunder thighs', 'the incredible bulk', 'elephant', 'pork chop', 'fatty' and 'lardass' appear on screen; 'the incredible bulk' and 'fatty' are voiced by a female voice, while the rest are voiced by a male voice. The way the words are animated and positioned gives them a certain kind of strength and 'weight', which is emphasised by the crashing noise when they bump into the bottom of the screen and on top of each other. They form a wall that grows until it is crashed by the title.

It is interesting that some of these insulting terms refer to animals (elephant, pork chop). As stated before in the analysis of the *Aisle of Shame*-scene in *Bulging Brides*, fat women are often connoted with animal-like features, which dehumanises and devalues them. The derogatory name 'the incredible bulk' (referring to the comic-figure the incredible hulk), is a sign of objectification due to the fact that it refers to a non-human figure on the one hand. On the other hand, as the incredible hulk is known for his

strength and aggression, it clearly implies that women are not to be strong and aggressive (above all not fat) – otherwise, they are subject to humiliation. The insulting term ‘thunder thighs’ refers to one specific part of the body. Again, the nickname is connoted to something strong (thunder) that is not appreciated in a woman’s body. The names ‘fatty’ and ‘lardass’ are an example for fat-shaming nicknames as they refer directly to the fat body that is clearly not what a woman’s body should look like.

The fact that the title ‘My big fat revenge’ destroys the wall, emphasised by a loud crashing noise and an earthquake-like animation, hints that the wall of humiliation these words form can (only?) be crashed by taking revenge on the person that used these names to hurt another person. This part of the opening scene is commented by a female voice, “Enough is enough. I’m in control now!”, implying that being thin is the way to go to achieve control and to put an end to the humiliation.

All in all, this scene shows that, according to the show, the only way to fight humiliation is to ‘pay attention’ to the nicknames. In other words, there is no possibility to stand up against humiliation than to give in to the requirements and acquire a thin body - only then, revenge is possible. Being thin is thus shown as the requirement for success in solving problems and the solution to problems; in fact, the thin body is the revenge itself. Control over the body is shown as the precondition for control over life – the question remains whether it is true control over life if a certain precondition has to be fulfilled and rules have to be obeyed before this is possible.

5.2.2. Scene 2 – Hillary’s Story

This about one minute-long scene takes place shortly after the opening scene and is part of the introduction of the first participant, Hillary. After revealing her weight (as will be discussed in the last part of the analysis) and talking about her youth, she starts explaining why she wants to participate in the show. She talks about her ex-boyfriend, Alex, who mistreated and humiliated her. By participating in the show, she wants to take revenge on him and make him feel as bad as she felt.

The scene consists of images of Hillary and Alex that are displayed and portray their history, close-up shots of her face while she is telling her story as well as medium close-up shots of her body that are commented by her voice off-screen. The camera is mostly on a straight level. There is quiet instrumental music, which serves as a background music. There are no special (sound) effects, graphics or any on-screen texts.

After a picture of Hillary and Alex is shown, Hillary starts to explain how the situation between her and Alex escalated. She states that he ‘got more vocal about his feelings’ and started to mock her because of her weight. At some point in their relationship, he started pinching her to make her notice how fat she was because he thought she might not be aware of the size of her body otherwise. While Hillary explains these acts of humiliation, she is shown standing in a bathroom in her underwear, pinching her body where Alex used to. She furthermore pinches the body parts that Alex used to mock. The images then switch from Hillary in the studio in an interview-situation to her standing in front of the bathroom mirror examining her body. Hillary explains that Alex started to jump on her back and demanded that she should walk around with him on her back to burn more calories; she states that she was ‘some kind of animal’ and that she was, obviously, in an abusive relationship. During this relationship she even gained some weight, not only due to the stress but furthermore because ‘subconsciously’ she was being ‘rebellious’ by eating more instead of listening to Alex, who claimed that they could have gotten married had she lost the weight because he wanted a ‘hot trophy wife’.

Before this short scene, Hillary had already explained that Alex wanted her to loose weight because he wanted to be wealthy and have a trophy wife he could be proud of – naturally, he could not have been proud of Hillary while she was fat. After this scene, she explains that he gave her a wedding ring that was two sizes too small, stating that if she lost enough weight so that the ring could fit it would be an engagement ring – he would only marry her if she lost the weight.

First of all, this scene clearly depicts the overall need for women to be thin to get married. By stating that they could have gotten married had she lost the weight, that her

ex-boyfriend wanted a hot trophy wife and thus could not have been proud of Hillary while she was fat, and furthermore by the fact that he gave her a ring that could only be an engagement ring if she lost the weight, it becomes clear that losing weight is the precondition for any kind of relationship. Being thin and beautiful are portrayed as the most important assets of a women due to the fact that Alex did not state that Hillary should change her hobbies or interests, but that she should lose weight so he could be proud of her and have ‘a trophy wife’ that would be worth marrying.

Furthermore, the fact that Alex jumped on her back and Hillary claims she was some kind of animal corresponds to the derogatory terms used in the opening scene: fat women are often equated with animals and treated in a dehumanising way. Hillary states that she was in an abusive relationship, which is clearly true; however, the ex-boyfriend probably even thought he was doing her a favour by reminding her of her body size and pushing her to loose weight instead of questioning his motives and standards.

Hillary states that she was subconsciously eating more to be rebellious, which is a common theme when it comes to women, fatness, and food. Women who eat as much as they want can be seen as rebelling against a society in which women have to restrict themselves – not only, but to a great deal – when it comes to food. A fat body can thus be seen as an act of rebellion because it is (often) the result of the person eating as much as she wants. (See Orbach 1978: 21; 28; 157; Hartley 2001: 65.) Especially in this case it can be seen as a rebellious act; however, the fact that Hillary participates in the show to take revenge with her thin body negates this idea, as she adheres to the standards instead of taking revenge in a non body-related way.

Again, the message is clear and in accordance to previous findings: women have to be thin to be suitable for marriage, women are seen as an asset for men and unrestricted eating can be seen as an act of rebellion.

5.2.3. Scene 3 – Pardis's Story

This 58 seconds-long scene introduces the second candidate, Pardis, to the audience. After revealing her weight, she talks about her culture. Pardis is Iranian, which makes this scene interesting for the analysis – differences and similarities between the western and Iranian society can be observed.

Similar to Hillary's introductory scene, also this scene consists of pictures of Pardis and her family and friends as well as close-up and medium close-up shots of her in an interview situation. The first shots are a close-up of a shisha and long shots inside an (Iranian) café that serve to emphasise the topic of the whole scene: Iranian culture and lifestyle. The camera remains on a straight angle and there are no graphics or special (sound) effects. The quiet instrumental music serves as background music.

After the introductory shots inside the Iranian café, Pardis is shown in an interview-like setting (medium close-up and close-up shots of her in front of a blue background). She starts to explain what the Iranian culture expects women to look like – she is visibly unhappy with these standards. While she explains, pictures of her and her family are displayed.

Pardis states that there is a big expectation in her culture especially towards women and that 'men are judged on their success' while women 'need to look good'. She explains that even young women have surgery to meet the beauty standards and look 'like Barbies' and that she thinks that this is disgusting. After stating that she is not doing what she is supposed to do because she weighs 233 pounds, Pardis says a sentence in Farsi. She translates it as meaning 'it's a waste, because your face is pretty' – she explains that in her culture, her 'pretty' face is a waste because it is attached to her 'fat' body. While she talks off-screen, she is shown standing in front of a mirror examining her body looking unsatisfied. In the end, there is a close-up of her unhappy face and a pan-shot of her body from her feet to her head. In the end, she states that 'Middle Eastern women need to be skinny and curvy at the same time' which she explains as being 'impossible' and although she laughs about this impossible standard she feels bad because she does not fulfil the requirements.

This scene is particularly interesting because it gives an idea about the beauty and body standards in a non-western society. Pardis states that it is the main goal for women to be beautiful and that it is necessary to spend money and time on looking good. This is emphasised by her comment that her face is a waste because it is attached to her body (in dependence on the saying in Farsi) – if a woman's body does not adhere to the beauty standard, it is not 'worth' anything and a pretty face is 'wasted' on a fat body. She compares the look young women want to achieve to the look of a Barbie doll – this matches the common western beauty standard (young, white, tall, thin, big breasts). This implies that the western beauty standard is also prevalent in a non-western culture. Pardis explains that Middle Eastern women are supposed to be skinny and curvy at the same time – this is a common requirement for Western women too. This implies that there is a very narrow and unrealistic beauty standard also for women in the Middle East that corresponds to the beauty standard for Western women.

Pardis's explanations emphasise the fact that women are required to look good and to spend money and time on achieving the ideal – otherwise, a woman's body is 'not good enough'. Interestingly, because *My Big Fat Revenge* is directed at 'Western' audiences, the fact that Pardis speaks about non-Western standards and the fact that the beauty standards in the two cultures are so similar, if not identical, validates and supports the Western perspective even more; the unreasonable beauty and body standards can thus be seen as a universal problem nowadays.

5.2.4. Scene 4 – Hillary Before/After

In this about 47 seconds-long scene, Hillary presents her 'after'-body to her family; thus, it can be equated with the mirror-scene that is typical for makeover shows. There are a few effects such as colour editing and cross-fading; the quiet music serves as background music.

In the beginning of the scene, there are retrospective shots of Hillary before the 'transformation' that are edited to look less colour-saturated in order to remind of her

‘dark’ past. While close-ups of Hillary sipping a drink and Hillary in her underwear in front of a mirror pinching various body parts are shown, Hillary states off-screen that she weighed 298 pounds and felt ‘hopeless and dark’. After these shots, suspense is created by showing a car’s door handle, which is supposedly the door handle of the car that took the candidates to their transformation three months ago. Hillary states off-screen that she likes herself now and is happy with the way she looks, the viewer gets to see body parts of her, but her complete ‘new’ body is not revealed until later on in this scene. She exits the car and walks towards her family who are waiting excitedly and expressing it throughout the second half of the scene by shouting and screaming excitedly. When Hillary reaches her family, she is shown in a medium long pan-shot enabling the viewer to examine her whole ‘new’ body.

There is a cross-fade to the way she looked three months ago, clarified through an on-screen text ‘3 months ago’. She is standing in a studio in front of a white background looking unhappy and wearing ‘normal’ clothes. The screen then fades to her ‘new’ body. She is standing outside, wearing a dress, high heels and glasses – thus, the transformation is not only visible in her figure, but also her styling is ‘improved’. Her family greets her and states how ‘happy and proud’ they are and that Hillary seems ‘totally transformed’. Hillary’s transformation is emphasised by pan-shots of her whole body that are inserted a couple of times; the viewer is able to examine her ‘new’ body. Hillary states that she is happy and feels confident.

The editing of this scene plays a big role in creating the before and after atmosphere: the retrospective shots of Hillary in this scene depict her unhappy life before the transformation, which is emphasised by the dark colour scheme of the shots. Her new life and happiness after the transformation are likewise emphasised by the colourful shots that show her together with her family.

As stated before, this scene corresponds to the mirror-scene that is typical for makeover-shows. The candidates ‘new’ body is revealed, commonly styled and with fashionable clothes. In this case, similar to the ‘after’-scene in *Bulging Brides* the candidate is ‘revealed’ to the family who are happy and proud and state how much she has changed

and transformed. It is interesting that contrastingly to the mirror scenes in other shows in which the candidate is revealed to ‘herself’, the candidate in *My Big Fat Revenge* is revealed to her family (=others). This highlights the expectation towards women to undergo a transformation to look good not only for themselves, but primarily to ‘please’ others.

The weight loss is referred to as a ‘transformation’ implying that everything has changed – not just the body is ‘new’ but the whole life of the candidates is going to go differently from now on. The message in this scene is clear: life with a ‘new’, thin body is better than with the ‘old’, fat body; the pain and effort that was necessary to obtain this body is not worth mentioning as the result is the only thing that matters.

5.2.5. Scene 5 – Illustrations

My Big Fat Revenge does not contain many illustrations, graphics or on-screen animations (except for the introduction). The following pictures illustrate the before and after-bodies of the candidates. It is interesting to compare the structure of these images to those of the images used in *Bulging Brides* as they imply a different approach to the interaction with the candidate.



Figure IV Hillary Before



Figure V Pardis Before

The first illustrations are images of the ‘before’-bodies of the candidates. They show the candidates in ‘normal’ clothes standing in a studio in front of a grey, simple background. The candidate walks into the picture and her name is inserted as she states her name and age (off-screen). Then she announces the weight (off-screen) as the numbers are inserted. The texts are displayed for a short while until the candidate leaves the picture.

It is interesting that in contrast to the before-illustrations in *Bulging Brides* these pictures do not include any measurements other than the weight. Furthermore, they do not list the imperfect body parts and what exactly has to be done to make them perfect. Generally speaking *My Big Fat Revenge* does not concentrate on particular body parts that have to be altered, but approaches the topic of weight loss in a broader way. In addition to that, the candidates are not shown in underwear. They are not rotating 'objects' that can be observed and examined by the viewer from every angle, but rather presented as 'people', which is emphasised further by 'labelling' them with their name, which is not the case in *Bulging Brides*.

All in all, the before-pictures in *My Big Fat Revenge* that are shown before the candidate starts telling her story do not objectify (by making the body rotate) and expose (by showing them in underwear) the participants as much as *Bulging Brides* does. Nevertheless, the mere fact that people are shown in direct relation to their weight and categorised by numbers on a scale implies that this is their most important feature and that it is appropriate to judge and evaluate them on this basis.



Figure VI Hillary Before/After



Figure VII Pardis Before/After

Figure VI and VII show the results of Hillary's and Pardis's transformation respectively. The images are displayed after the scene in which the candidate presents herself to her family and shortly before the candidate takes revenge on the person who humiliated her. The candidate is shown in a medium long shot in front of a grey, simple background. Her 'before' and 'after' body are displayed next to each other with the weight before and after inserted over the image of the body. While these images are shown, the candidate comments on her weight loss off-screen. The pictures of the candidate before and after her weight loss differ not only because of the weight, but also

in terms of clothing, make-up and body posture: in the before-pictures, the candidate appears to be shy whereas she seems more confident and happy with herself in the after-pictures.

The candidate's comments emphasise this. Pardis states that she feels 'absolutely amazing' and that 'this is only the beginning', which implies that she can start a 'new life' now that she lost the weight and is confident with her body – again, weight loss is shown as the precondition to start a new, happy, satisfying life.

In comparison to the before and after pictures in *Bulging Brides*, these images portray the candidates in a slightly more neutral way. Instead of being displayed in underwear, the candidates are fully clothed in both pictures. Furthermore, the candidates' weight is the only measurement that is revealed – in contrast, the before and after comparison in *Bulging Brides* focuses on exactly how many inches the candidate lost in which body part. Once again, the bodies do not rotate in these images whereas they do in *Bulging Brides*; thus, the candidates are not objectified in such a strong way. However, the mere fact that the candidates are presented together with their weight rather than any other information points towards the great importance of the numbers on the scale that pose the basis for judgement and categorisation.

All in all the graphics in *Revenge* act less as a tool of objectification than a means of illustration as the candidates are portrayed in a more neutral way. However, both show the weight as the only attribute of the candidate, which leads to the notion that a woman's weight is her most important feature – character or education do not play a significant role.

6. Results and Conclusion

In the (modern) Western society the outward appearance is substantial to every aspect of a woman's life – first and foremost, the goal is to be thin. This has been discussed by various scholars as shown in the theoretical part of this thesis and has been demonstrated in the analysed television programmes. A number of themes emerged from the analysis; due to the nature of the study and topic, the following results refer to women and female bodies.

Both *Bulging Brides* and *My Big Fat Revenge* revolve around the topic of weight loss, which is not only understood as the mere reduction of body weight but includes further implications. Particularly in *Bulging Brides*, weight loss is constructed as the one precondition for a wedding (and thus, marriage); a woman that is overweight is in no way suitable to be a bride, a wife – in other words, not able to 'get' and 'keep' a husband/male partner.

The fact that the weight loss in this episode of *Bulging Brides* is so minimal implies that it is not a question of health, but appears to be solely an issue of beauty. The candidate is gauged by a very narrow ideal and is supposed to adhere to the typical body standards and there is no room (even literally no room in the dress) for any deviation or individuality. The staging of the show supports these requirements by following the typical scheme of makeover shows. First of all, shame is installed in the candidate by the judges, which serves to make her recognise her failure and deficiency and enables the judges to then form and correct her body and behaviour.

Bulging Brides furthermore utilises a very specific vocabulary and overall theme by means of wedding and marriage related terms and metaphors. By constructing the show in a way, that resembles the process before the wedding and the actual act of getting married (for example by using terms such as *Aisle of Shame* for one section of each episode) the implications that are transferred become very clear. Before being suitable and 'ready', as the judges like to emphasise, for the wedding, the bride is not only required to lose weight, but furthermore to abstain from the lifestyle she used to lead. This includes, amongst others, eating unhealthy food or going out for drinks with her

(girl)friends. In a metaphorical way this can be seen as the stereotypical requirements for a (soon-to-be) married woman: she is supposed to confess her sins, obtain absolution – which is represented by the *Kitchen Purge* in *Bulging Brides* to be able to alter her behaviour in a way that makes her husband happy and enables her to be a wife.

It becomes clear that, for the bride (in fact, any woman), being thin is more important than anything else, not only for the wedding day but also in the course of the marriage, as emphasised in the *Future Vision*, to be able to make her husband happy and proud of her. Being beautiful, although being a requirement too, is not the most important aspect – being thin is crucial for every aspect of a woman's life. The thin body is thus constructed as the fundamental, essential asset of a woman – with an 'imperfect' (= fat) body, she is not worthy to be a wife. In other words, as it is still a crucial aspect of most women's lives to find a husband and be married to fulfil the stereotypical requirements for female individuals, a woman who is not thin, and thus not suitable for marriage, is unable to be a 'real' woman.

My Big Fat Revenge, although similarly concerned with the topic of losing weight, does not revolve around the wedding theme, but rather attempts to construct weight loss as an empowering feature for women to regain control over their lives. The opening scene in itself, which ends with the exclamation 'I'm in control now' proves that a thin body is seen as the precondition for a woman to be able to have a stand in life and be heard. Weight loss is furthermore constructed as the one most effective way to take revenge on anyone who humiliated and hurt the candidates. Instead of pointing out other methods of regaining strength and self-consciousness, such as education, the success of losing weight is established as the most important action a woman can take to get even with the people who were doing her wrong. Although the weight loss is quite extreme in this case and thus could partly be explained with health concerns, it is still connected to beauty, as only a beautiful (=thin) woman can provoke the strong emotions in the person that humiliated her that are required to enable an act of revenge.

The implication that losing weight is a form of regaining control over the body and the life is thought provoking. As stated earlier in this thesis, women claim to lose weight,

wear certain clothes and make-up because *they* themselves want to, which is a common belief in Western society, especially nowadays. Many women view it as a freedom of decision whether they want to lose weight or not; however, the question remains how independently female individuals really make this decision. If the common requirement for women is to possess a certain body and body form, how freely does one choose whether to have this body or not? It can be argued that if, to obtain a certain freedom and exercise control, the body has to be controlled first to adhere to a very narrow standard, the freedom is very limited in the first place.

Despite the fact that *My Big Fat Revenge* is not solely focused on the topic of marriage, the idea of thinness and beauty as a precondition for a successful partnership is prevalent in the episode that has been analysed in this thesis. Overall, the humiliation by a boyfriend or male friend and the following ‘need’ to take revenge pose a common reason for the participants to want to lose weight. The example of the participant Hillary’s ex-boyfriend stating that the ring he gave to her could be an engagement ring if she lost enough weight so that it could fit, as well as her statement that he wanted a ‘trophy wife’, underlines the claim that there is a strong expectation for women to be thin. This shows that women are still seen as an ‘asset’ to men – as a trophy wife – and that women need to be thin to be granted this status that can be positive in the current society for economical benefits. Thinness can be thus seen as the way for women to obtain and secure their status in life – although this is not the case for every single woman in Western society, it is a fact that cannot be denied.

Interestingly, *Bulging Brides* and *My Big Fat Revenge* differ from each other when it comes to who exactly provokes the shame in the candidates that serves as their reason to change. In *Bulging Brides* this is executed by the judges during the show, with the best examples being the *Aisle of Shame*, *Kitchen Purge* and *Future Vision*. In *My Big Fat Revenge*, this process has already been completed: the boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, managers or co-workers who humiliated and mistreated the candidate are the ones who shamed her and influenced her decision to participate in the show. Despite the differences, one thing remains the same: the shame mostly comes from the outside,

which again poses the question whether it really is the candidate's own, personal decision or the mere result of a life of humiliation and (body)-shaming.

Although the issues of space and power are not addressed directly in the analysed shows, the results are of importance when seen in the greater context. As mentioned before, the idea that women can only be in control when they take control of their bodies implies that control has to be executed to gain control – the question remains whether this is 'real' power from the inside over the self or power from the outside that is executed by the dominant power in society.

In relation to the research questions that I set out to investigate the following can be argued. First of all, as observed not only in the examined literature but also in the analysed shows, the thin beauty standard is the current standard women are subjected to – it is *the* requirement for success in life and society.

A recurrent issue in both shows is the feeling of personal failure and unworthiness the candidates express. The act of labelling certain body parts as disgusting and referring to them by derogatory terms such as 'thunder thighs' is a common occurrence in the process of creating shame and the subsequent dieting, pointing towards the perception of the respective candidate of herself as having failed in obtaining a beautiful body (see for example Ogden 1992: 20). Furthermore, there is a general association of negative traits with fat bodies and fat people; not only do the candidates see themselves as having failed, but they also refer to their (fat) bodies as disgusting, animal-like and overall unattractive. The thin (after) bodies on the other hand are seen as positive, as the beginning of a new life, as the one thing that makes them ready for whatever may come (be it the revenge or the wedding) – in other words, the thin body remains the desired, and required, body.

Both *Bulging Brides* and *My Big Fat Revenge* portray women's bodies stereotypically, as can be observed, for example, in the way the women are made up and styled in the after-scenes. Stereotypical femininity is the goal; together with being thin (which can actually be seen as a 'feminine' trait nowadays) this is the requirement for a successful

wedding/marriage (*Bulging Brides*) or a confrontation with a person that humiliated the candidate (*My Big Fat Revenge*). Furthermore, not only are women's bodies portrayed in a rather objectifying way through visual techniques such as animations, they are additionally connoted with animal-like features. Overall, fat women are seen as having no control over themselves, meaning that the state of being fat is equal to a state of not being in control over their lives. This is especially obvious in *My Big Fat Revenge*, where the act of achieving thinness is directly equated with taking control.

A thin person/body cannot pose such great resistance as a fat, big one – the fact that the ideal body for women is very thin and fragile implies that power is not what this body possesses. Therefore, I argue that there is a clear connection between the thin, powerless ideal body for women and the idea of keeping women under control. The beauty and body standards for women are constructed in a way that not the fat body is desired, but the thin one – a body that cannot pose resistance, be it physically or in society. Not only are thin bodies physically powerless and take up less space than big, fat ones, but the fact that women are, in a way, required to be obsessed with their outward appearance and aware of their bodies at all times renders them mentally powerless because their mental resources are constantly occupied. Instead of spending time and money on political or humanitarian projects, instead of claiming higher positions in companies or furthering their education, women 'work' on their bodies – this is a sign for the thin ideal being used as a means of oppression to keep women 'in their place' in society and to support and maintain the existing gender hierarchy. Furthermore, a woman who is too busy thinking about her body, and therefore might not manage to obtain a degree or a well-paid job, will remain dependent on the money of men (as men still earn more money overall) – she is thus constantly dependent on a husband or partner and will spend even more time on altering her body to be sure to be 'suitable' for a man, 'keep' him and maintain her status.

I argue that being thin can be seen as the 'new beautiful'. Although other traits such as long hair are valued, the thin body is what counts. This claim is supported for example by the statement of one candidate in *My Big Fat Revenge*, who states that her pretty face is 'a waste' because it is attached to a fat body, which this is clearly an indication for the

importance of thinness. Similarly, as shown in the theoretical part of this thesis, being thin is *the* feature women are supposed to possess in the modern Western society – there is a very narrow standard of what thinness is and it is becoming narrower and narrower. Women are under a great pressure to adhere to this narrow standard and there are near to no possibilities for individuality or personal preferences. This can be seen, for example, when looking at actresses, singers, or other celebrities. Size zero (or nowadays even double or triple zero) is the standard and whoever does not adhere to this standard is not hired, booked or even mentioned, except for negatively. The idea of a size that is actually called ‘zero’, meaning nothing, allows an interpretation that it is required for women to be so small and thin that they are nearly invisible – this points to a very powerless ideal for women. (see for example Hartley 2001.)

Women are ‘valuable’ when they are thin, meaning when they do not take up (too) much space in society, are small and fragile, and do not possess (physical and social) power. In the mass media, this is expressed, amongst others, through makeover shows, in which the most desirable trait and prerequisite for any success in life is a thin body. In conclusion, thus, I argue that through mass media that distribute this extremely thin ideal – but also throughout the whole of society – the traditional gender hierarchy and thus unequal relationships of power are constructed, reproduced, and maintained. The thin ideal can thus be seen as a powerful tool in keeping women under control – especially due to the fact that women themselves participate in the production and reinforcement of the ideal.

The contemporary notions of not only the possibility, but rather the obligation to alter the body to meet the beauty standards, the responsibility for the own outward appearance, and also the idea of being in control of one’s life through the alteration of the body underline this process. As long as women believe, that they are in control by changing their body to meet the beauty and body standards, this system of implicit control functions to keep the gender hierarchy in place and sustain unequal relations of power.

6.1. Challenges and Limitations of the Study

There are, of course, challenges and limitations to every kind of research and study. In this case, it can be argued that the sample size is rather small, meaning that the results do not claim to be a representation of a greater whole, but rather an example for the use of thinness as a tool to exercise control over female bodies in the genre of makeover shows. As mentioned before, this is possible due to makeover shows being structured similarly, which facilitates the understanding of a wider area by concentrating on a smaller sample. It is clear that by concentrating on makeover shows there is no claim on validity in connection to other media contents (such as reality television shows, daily soaps or talk shows); however, this is not the intention of this study, as the research would have to be conducted differently.

One point to take into consideration is the focus of the method(s). The methods I chose focused on the contents of the material, meaning that the audience was not taken into account, which could benefit a research in several ways. The context in which a show is produced and the context in which it is consumed play an important role; however, this is not the intention of this thesis, but it would be a worthwhile research problem for a different study. (see for example Bignell 2004: 86)

It is important to state that although I chose the episodes randomly, a true randomisation is not possible in this case. Although objectivity is the goal of this study, the influence the researcher herself takes cannot be denied. I play a substantial role in influencing not only the results, but furthermore the topic and material of the study and research itself, as I am part of my field as a researcher. Furthermore, I myself am part of the gendered society, meaning that I cannot act detached from existing expectations and (power) dynamics which I myself am connected to and entrenched in.

In addition, the influence of the gendered society on the study results as a whole cannot be denied. As mentioned before, qualitative methods themselves can be seen as inherently gendered, even ‘female’ (Oakley 2000; in Järviluoma et al. 2003). It can even be argued that due to the connotation of the ‘female’ method with less subjectivity than the masculinised quantitative methods, the outcomes as the result of ‘soft’ methods

might be appraised in a way that assumes more subjectivity than objectivity, which I claim is only true to a certain extent. Every researcher, no matter the research method, is under an immense influence of his or her time, society, gender and upbringing, meaning that even the results of a supposedly completely objective method are in every case affected by external and internal factors due to the choice of the topic, sample, material and not least the focus of the researcher. (see for example Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski 2014: 29.)

As stated before, there is an important point to consider in connection to the limitations of the recognition of the results. As Pruin DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2014: 29) state, ideological beliefs in a culture influence which kinds of results are accepted as facts. According to this I argue that a critically orientated thesis like this one, which not only examines a topic from a point of view that is not the dominant one, and additionally lists results that differ from the dominant point of view even more, is likely to be scrutinised. Nowadays, the thin ideal for women is commonly accepted as ‘another beauty standard’. As long as this is the case, studies that claim it to be more than that, to be a political tool, are subject to critique – however, it is possible that this will change over time, as with many academic propositions in the past.

6.2. Suggestions for further Research

To develop a full picture of the topic, further research should be conducted. Due to my nature as a researcher who has studied and lived in different countries, which differ from each other concerning the equality of the genders it would be of interest to examine media contents from different countries. When talking about makeover shows that are commonly distributed or imported from the United States of America to Europe or used as a model for similar shows that are produced in Europe, it would be rewarding to attempt a comparison between the original show from the USA and the remake from Europe. Furthermore, it would be possible to conduct research on shows that are conceptualised in a different country than the US to be able to point out differences and similarities in gender equality and cultural ideologies. However, Europe cannot be seen as one entity due to the great differences that exist between the countries; it would

therefore be appropriate to concentrate on specific countries. Finland (and possibly other northern European countries) supposedly having a high equality between the genders would be an interesting area to conduct the research, possibly comparing Finnish makeover shows to those of a southern European country, or of the US as the country of origin of a show. One example that comes to mind would be the show *The Biggest Loser*, with the Finnish equivalent being *Suurin Pudottaja* (*biggest loser*). Although this show does not focus solely on women, it would be possible to examine whether the beauty and body standards differ, how the candidates are treated, and how the shows are structured.

Whereas this study concentrated on the genre of makeover shows, it would be worthwhile to take into consideration a multitude of different media types, such as advertisements in print media. This would not only allow an insight into the contents of the chosen material, but also into the different processes of the production of meanings, beliefs and ideologies.

In addition to studying beauty standards in the context of media contents, it would be rewarding to focus on the implication of the thin ideal for women on society in general. As stated before, fatness can be seen as a rebellion against conforming to the norms of female beauty. (see for example DeMello 2014: 18) It would be of interest to examine the development of the thin ideal in relation to the changing position of women throughout the 20th Century, as it can be argued that there is a connection between the 'rise' of women to more power in society and the rise in expectations towards their bodies. In other words, the more power women have in society, the more they have to adhere to beauty standards, which can be seen as a way to exercise control over half of the world's population. (see for example Hartley 2001: 62.) To do this it would be necessary to examine older media contents dating back to the beginning of the 20th Century to be able to grasp the whole big picture and possibly predict the further development.

A relatively new concept is the concept of lookism. As DeMello (2014: 182) states, it is the practice of discriminating against people on the basis of their looks; it is connected

to the concept of sizeism, meaning the discrimination on the basis of the body size. To fight against the prejudices against ‘ugly’ and ‘fat’ people, several movements have surfaced in the past decades. One of them is the Fat Pride movement that was established in the 1960s and aims to “alleviate prejudices against fatness, fight social inequality and empower fat people” (Harjunen 2009: 55).

I argue that research has to take these movements into account to empower especially women to reclaim their bodies and resist the “tyranny of slenderness”, as Kim Chernin (1983) words it. Jane Ogden (1992: 23) argues that “thinness is still the goal and fatness the problem” – twenty-three years later, in the year 2015, this remains true. I agree with Naomi Wolf’s (1990: 153) statement that “ dieting is the most potent political sedative in women’s history”, which I believe to still be valid, and argue that the need for women to be beautiful and thin will increase as long as women’s freedom increases. The thin ideal acts as a strong, functional and powerful tool to reproduce and maintain traditional hierarchies – as long as this ideal exists and women are taught that they are only valuable if they adhere to it, a gender-equal society is not possible.

References

- Academic. (2000-2014). *Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias*. Retrieved 10 23, 2014 from <http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/10098160>
- Alfermann, D. (1996). *Geschlechterrollen und geschlechtstypisches Verhalten [Gender roles and gender typical behaviour]*. Stuttgart : W. Kohlhammer Verlag .
- Allen, A. (1996). Foucault on Power: A Theory for Feminists. In S. J. Hekman (Ed.), *Feminist interpretations of Michel Foucault*. (pp. 265-281). University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Aphramor, L., & Gingras, J. (2009). That Remains To Be Said: Disappeared Feminist Discourses on Fat in Dietetic Theory and Practice. In E. Rothblum, & S. Solovay (Eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader* (pp. 97-105). New York: New York University Press.
- Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York: Routledge.
- Bartky, S. L. (1998). Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power. In R. Weitz (Ed.), *The Politics of Women's Bodies. Sexuality, Appearance and Behavior*. (pp. 25-45). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Becker-Schmidt, R., & Knapp, G.-A. (2000). *Feministische Theorien zur Einführung [Feminist Theories - Introduction]*. Hamburg: Junius Verlag.
- Bignell, J. (2004). *An Introduction to Television Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Bordo, S. R. (1989). The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault. In A. M. Jaggar, & S. R. Bordo (Eds.), *Gender/Body/Knowledge. Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (pp. 13-33). New Brunswick: Routledge University Press.
- Bordo, S. (1993). *Unbearable Weight. Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Brandt, J. (2014). "As Seen on TV": Gender, Television and Popular Culture. In A. Trier-Bieniek, & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Gender & Pop Culture: A Text-Reader*. (pp. 103-120). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Butler, J. (1991). *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter [Gender Trouble]* . Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Butler, J. (1990). Excerpts from 'Subversive Bodily Acts' from Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. In J. Rendell, B. Penner, & I. Borden (Eds.), *Gender Space Architecture. An Interdisciplinary Introduction*. (pp. 96-98). New York: Routledge .
- Butler, J. G. (1994). *Television. Critical Methods and Applications* . Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

- Butler, J. (1996). Sexual Inversions. In S. J. Hekman (Ed.), *Feminist interpretations of Michel Foucault* (pp. 59-75). University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Chernin, K. (1985). *The Hungry Self. Women, Eating & Identity*. New York: Perennial Library.
- Chernin, K. (1983). *Womansize. The Tyranny of Slenderness*. London: The Women's Press Limited .
- Davis, K., Leijenaar, M., & Oldersma, J. (Eds.). (1991). *The Gender of Power* . London: Sage .
- DeMello, M. (2014). *Body Studies. An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Diamond, I., & Quinby, L. (Eds.). (1988). *Feminism & Foucault*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Diamond, I., & Quinby, L. (1988). Introduction. In I. Diamond, & L. Quinby (Eds.), *Feminism & Foucault*. (pp. ix-xx). Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Dimen, M. (1989). Power, Sexuality, and Intimacy. In A. M. Jaggar, & S. R. Bordo (Eds.), *Gender/Body/Knowledge. Feminist Recunstructions of Being and Knowing* (pp. 34-51). New Brunswick: Routledge University Press.
- Einav, G., & Carey, J. (2009). Is TV Dead? Consumer Behavior in the Digital TV Environment and Beyond. In D. Gerbarg (Ed.), *Television Goes Digital* (pp. 115-129). New York: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Einav, G., & Carey, J. (2009). Is TV Dead? Consumer Behavior in the Digital TV Environment and Beyond. In D. Gerbarg, *Television Goes Digital* (pp. 115-129). New York: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Erdman Farrell, A. (2011). *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture*. . New York: New York University Press .
- Evans Braziel, J., & LeBesco, K. (Eds.). (2001). *Bodies out of Bounds. Fatness and Transgression*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Evans Braziel, J., & LeBesco, K. (Eds.). *Bodies out of Bounds: Fatness and Transgression*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power* . New York: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse*. London: Arnold.
- Faulstich, W. (1976). *Einführung in die Filmanalyse [Introduction to film-analysis]*. Tübingen: TBL-Verlag Narr.
- Flick, U. (2006). Triangulation. In V. Jupp (Ed.), *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods* (pp. 305-308). London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.
- Fraser, L. (2009). The Inner Corset. A Brief History of Fat in the United States. In E. Rothblum, & S. Solovay (Eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader*. (pp. 289-296). New York: New York University Press.
- Gerbarg, D. (. (2009). *Television Goes Digital* . New York: Springer Science + Business Media .
- Gerbarg, D. (2009). Introduction: The Digital Evolution of Television. In D. Gerbarg (Ed.), *Television Goes Digital* (pp. 1-4). New York: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Gerbarg, D. (2009). Introduction: The Digital Evolution of Television. In D. Gerbarg, *Television Goes Digital* (pp. 1-4). New York: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Gerbarg, D. (Ed.). (2009). *Television Goes Digital*. New York: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Gill, R. (2007). *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gill, R., & Scharff, C. (Eds.). (2013). *New Femininities. Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Giovanelli, D., & Ostertag, S. (2009). Media Representations, Body Size and Self-Discipline. In E. Rothblum, & S. Solovay (Eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader* (pp. 289-296). New York: New York University Press.
- Given, L. M. (Ed.). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* . Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. .
- Gray, J., & Lotz, A. D. (2012). *Television Studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Guthman, J. (2009). Neoliberalism and the Constitution of Contemporary Bodies. In E. Rothblum, & S. Solovay (Eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader*. (pp. 187-196). New York: New York University Press .
- Haber, H. F. (1996). Foucault Pumped: Body Politics and the Muscled Woman. In S. J. Hekman (Ed.), *Feminist interpretations of Foucault* (pp. 137-156). University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1968). *Erkenntnis und Interesse [Knowledge and Human Interest]*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Harding, S. (Ed.). (1987). *Feminism and Methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Harding, S. (1987). Introduction - Is there a Feminist Method? In S. Harding (Ed.), *Feminism and Methodology* (pp. 1-14). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Harjunen, H. (2009). *Women and Fat: Approaches to the social study of fatness*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä University Printing House.

Harris-Moore, D. (2014). *Media and the Rhetoric of Body Perfection. Cosmetic Surgery, Weight Loss and Beauty in Popular Culture*. . Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited .

Hartley, C. (2001). Letting Ourselves Go: Making Room for the Fat Body in Feminist Scholarship. In J. E. Braziel, & K. LeBesco(Eds), *Bodies out of Bounds: Fatness and Transgression*. (pp. 60-73). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hekman, S. J. (Ed.). (1996). *Feminist interpretations of Michel Foucault*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Henley, N. M. (1977). *Body Politics. Power, Sex & Nonverbal Communication*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc. .

Hetrick, A., & Attig, D. (2009). Sitting Pretty: Fat Bodies, Classroom Desks, and Academic Excess. In E. Rothblum, & S. Solovay (Eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader* (pp. 197-204). New York: New York University Press.

Järviluoma, H., Moisala, P., & Vilkkko, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Gender and Qualitative Methods* . London: SAGE Publications .

Järviluoma, H., Moisala, P., & Vilkkko, A. (2003). Performing and Negotiating Gender. In H. Järviluoma, P. Moisala, & A. Vilkkko (Eds.), *Gender and Qualitative Methods* (pp. 1-27). London: SAGE Publications.

Jaggar, A. M., & Bordo, S. R. (Eds.). (1989). *Gender/Body/Knowledge. Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. New Brunswick: Routledge University Press.

Jaggar, A. M., & Bordo, S. R. (1989). Introduction. In A. M. Jaggar, & S. R. Bordo (Eds.), *Gender/Body/Knowledge. Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (pp. 1-10). New Brunswick: Routledge University Press.

Johnstone, B. (2008). *Discourse Analysis* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Jupp, V. (Ed.). *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods*. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Karsch, M. (2004). *Feminismus für Eilige [Feminism in a nutshell]*. Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH.

Knapp, G.-A. (2000). Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion von Geschlecht [Construction and De-construction of Gender]. In R. Becker-Schmidt, & G.-A. Knapp, *Feministische Theorien zur Einführung [Feminist Theories - Introduction]* (pp. 63-102). Hamburg: Junius Verlag .

Kreisky, E. (2008). Fitte Wirtschaft und schlanker Staat: das neoliberale Regime über die Bäuche.[Fit Economy and Thin State: the Neoliberal Regime over the Bellies]. In H.

Schmidt-Semisch, & F. Schorb (Eds.), *Kreuzzug gegen Fette. Sozialwissenschaftliche Aspekte des gesellschaftlichen Umgangs mit Übergewicht und Adipositas.* [Crusade against Fats. Sociological Aspects of the Social Interaction with Overweight and Adipositas] (pp. 143-162). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Lazar, M. M. (2013). The Right to Be Beautiful: Postfeminist Identity and Consumer Beauty Advertising. In R. Gill, & C. Scharff (Eds.), *New Femininities. Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity* (pp. 37-51). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Leavy, P., & Trier-Bieniek, A. (2014). Introduction to Gender & Pop Culture. In A. Trier-Bieniek, & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Gender & Pop Culture: A Text-Reader* (pp. 1-25). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

LeBesco, K. (2004). *Revolting Bodies? The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Lorber, J. (1998). Believing is Seeing. Biology as Ideology. In R. Weitz (Ed.), *The Politics of Women's Bodies. Sexuality, Appearance and Behavior* (pp. 12-24). New York: Oxford University Press.

Markula, P., Burns, M., & Riley, S. (2008). Introducing Critical Bodies: Representations, Identities and Practices of Weight and Body Management. In S. Riley, M. Burns, H. Frith, S. Wiggins, & P. Markula (Eds.), *Critical Bodies. Representations, Identities and Practices of Weight and Body Management*. (pp. 1-22). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Markula, P., Burns, M., Riley, S., Wiggins, S., & Frith, H. (Eds.). *Critical Bodies. Representations, Identities and Practices of Weight and Body Management*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

McKinley, N. M. (1999). Ideal Weight/Ideal Women. Society Constructs the Female. In J. Sobal, & D. Maurer (Eds.), *Weighty Issues. Fatness and Thinness as Social Problems*. (pp. 97-115). New York: Walter de Gruyter, Inc.

Moser, A. (2010). *Kampfzone Geschlechterwissen. Kritische Analyse populärwissenschaftlicher Konzepte von Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit.* [Battle Zone Gender Knowledge. Critical Analysis of Concepts of Masculinity and Femininity in Popular Science]. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Muncie, J. (2006). Discourse Analysis. In V. Jupp, *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods* (pp. 75-77). London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Nissen, U. (1998). *Kindheit, Geschlecht und Raum. Sozialisationstheoretische Zusammenhänge geschlechtsspezifischer Raumaneignung.* [Childhood, Gender and Space. Gender Specific Appropriation of Space and Socialisation Theory]. Weinheim: Juventa Verlag.

Ogden, J. (1992). *Fat Chance! The Myth of Dieting Explained.* . London: Routledge.

- Oldersma, J., & Davis, K. (1991). Introduction. In K. Davis, M. Leijenaar, & J. Oldersma (Eds.), *The Gender of Power* (pp. 1-18). London: Sage.
- Orbach, S. (1978). *Anti Diät Buch. Über die Psychologie der Dickleibigkeit, die Ursachen von Eßstörungen.* [Fat is a feminist issue]. München: Verlag Frauenoffensive.
- Ouellette, L., & Hay, J. (2008). *Better Living through Reality TV. Television and Post-welfare Citizenship*. . Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Palzkill, B., Scheffel, H., & Sobiech, G. (1991). *Bewegungs(t)räume - Frauen - Körper - Sport* [Spaces and Dreams of Movement - Women - Bodies - Sport]. München: Verlag Frauenoffensive.
- Pavlidis, A., & Fullagar, S. (2014). *Sport, Gender and Power. The Rise of Roller Derby*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited .
- Phillips, L., & Jørgenson, M. W. (2002). Critical Discourse Analysis. In L. Phillips, & M. W. Jørgenson, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (pp. 60-95). London: Sage.
- Phillips, L., & Jørgenson, M. W. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: Sage.
- Pollack Seid, R. (1989). *Never too thin. Why Women are at War with their Bodies*. . New York: Prentice Hall Press .
- Prohaska, A., & Gailey, J. (2009). Fat Women as "Easy Targets" - Achieving Masculinity through Hogging. In E. Rothblum, & S. Solovay (Eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader*. (pp. 158-166). New York and London: New York University Press.
- Pruin DeFrancisco, V., & Palczewski, C. H. (2014). *Gender in Communication. A Critical Introduction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.
- Rauter, G. (1998). *Raum und Zeit im Bewegungsleben des Kindes: ein historischer und gesellschaftlicher Entwicklungsverlauf von der Aufklärung bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*. [Time and Space in the Movement of Children] . Hamburg: Czwalina Verlag.
- Rendell, J., Penner, B., & Borden, I. (Eds.). (2000). *Gender Space Architecture. An Interdisciplinary Introduction*. . New York: Routledge.
- Richardson, N., & Wearing, S. (2014). *Gender in the Media*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rothblum, E., & Solovay, S. (Eds.). (2009). *The Fat Studies Reader*. London: New York University Press.
- Sawicki, J. (1991). *Disciplining Foucault. Feminism, Power and the Body*. New York: Routledge.
- Schmidt-Semisch, H., & Schorb, F. (Eds.). (2008). *Kreuzzug gegen Fette. Sozialwissenschaftliche Aspekte des gesellschaftlichen Umgangs mit Übergewicht und*

Adipositas.[Crusade against Fats. Sociological Aspects of the Social Interaction with Overweight and Adipositas]. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Schorb, F. (2008). Adipositas in Form gebracht. Vier Problemwahrnehmungen. [Obesity in Form. Four Perceptions of the Problem]. In H. Schmidt-Semisch, & F. Schorb (Eds.), *Kreuzzug gegen Fette. Sozialwissenschaftliche Aspekte des gesellschaftlichen Umgangs mit Übergewicht und Adipositas.[Crusade against Fats. Sociological Aspects of the Social Interaction with Overweight and Adipositas]* (pp. 57-78). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Screenwriting Science. (2008-2015). Retrieved April 27, 2015 from <http://screenwritingscience.com/sequence-scene-definitions/>

Shank, G. (2008). Semiotics. In L. M. Given(Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 807-811). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Slice. (n.d.). *Bulging Brides*. Retrieved 10 23, 2014 from https://web.archive.org/web/20131025023926/http://www.slice.ca/shows/showspage.aspx?title_id=113151

Slice. (n.d.). *My Big Fat Revenge* . Retrieved 10 23, 2014 from <http://www.slice.ca/my-big-fat-revenge/>

Sobal, J., & Maurer, D. (Eds.). (1999). *Weighty Issues. Fatness and Thinness as Social Problems*. New York: Walter der Gruyter, Inc.

Sobiech, G. (1991). "Ich hatte das Gefühl, irgendetwas ist jetzt vorbei!" Die Pubertät - Brüche und Ambivalenzen in der Körper und Bewegungsentwicklung von Mädchen [I felt like something had ended now. Puberty - Discontinuities and Ambivalences in Girls' Development of Bodies and Movement]. In B. Palzkill, H. Scheffel, & G. Sobiech, *Bewegungs(t)räume - Frauen - Körper - [Spaces and Dreams of Movement - Women - Bodies - Sport]* (pp. 47-61). München: Verlag Frauenoffensive.

Thoms, U. (2000). Körperstereotype. Veränderung in der Bewertung von Schlankheit und Fettleibigkeit in den letzten 200 Jahren. [Body Stereotypes. Changes in the Evaluation of Thinness and Fatness in the past 200 Years]. In C. Wischermann, & S. Haas (Eds.), *Körper mit Geschichte. Der menschliche Körper als Ort der Selbst- und Weltdeutung. [Bodys with History. The Human Body as a Space for the Interpretation of the Self and the World]* (pp. 281-308). Stuttgart: Steiner.

Tincknell, E. (2013). Scourging the Abject Body: Ten Years Younger and Fragmented Femininity under Neoliberalism. In R. Gill, & C. Scharff (Eds.), *New Femininities. Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. (pp. 83-95). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

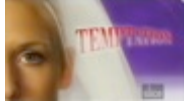



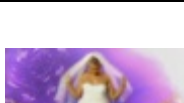
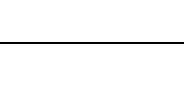
Trier-Bieniek, A., & Leavy, P. (Eds.). (2014). *Gender & Pop Culture: A Text-Reader*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

- Walliman, N. (2006). *Social Research Methods*. London: Sage Publications, Ltd. .
- Weber, B. R. (2007). Makeover as Takeover: Scenes of Affective Domination on Makeover TV. *Configuration* , 15 (1), 77-99.
- Weber, B. R. (2009). *Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship and Celebrity*. . Durham: Duke University Press.
- Weitz, R. (1998). A History of Women's Bodies. In R. Weitz (Ed.), *The Politics of Women's Bodies. Sexuality, Appearance and Behavior*. (pp. 3-11). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weitz, R. (Ed.). (1998). *The Politics of Women's Bodies. Sexuality, Appearance and Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Whelehan, I. (2000). *Overloaded. Popular Culture and the Future of Feminism*. . London: Women's Press .
- Wiggins, S. (2008). Section I: Representations and Constructions of Body Weight and Body Management. In P. Markula, M. Burns, & S. Riley (Eds.), *Critical Bodies. Representations, Identities and Practices of Weight and Body Management*. (pp. 23-26). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wischermann, C., & Haas, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Körper mit Geschichte. Der menschliche Körper als Ort der Selbst- und Weltdeutung. [Bodys with History. The Human Body as a Space for the Interpretation of the Self and the World]*. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Wolf, N. (1990). *The Beauty Myth*. London: Chatto & Windus .
- Zupkus, L. (2013, 07 17). *My Big Fat Revenge - Oxygen Announces New Series: "My Big Fat Revenge"* . Retrieved 10 27, 2014 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20130727083712/http://my-big-fat-revenge.oxygen.com/blogs/press-release>

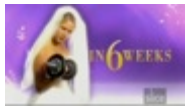

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
FILM PROTOCOL
BULGING BRIDES SCENE 1
OPENING SCENE




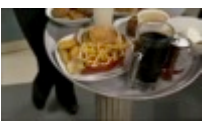


II

Take	Framing	Camera Angle	Screenshot	Sound	Contents	Spoken Text	Music
1	extreme close-up	straight level		music	close-up of a woman with a veil; the word 'TEMPTATION' appears on the right side of the screen, her eyes turn that way		Mexican inspired instrumental
2	medium shot	straight level		music	Animation of a woman surrounded by food, reaching for various items.		Mexican inspired instrumental
3	close-up	straight level		music	various 'temptations' related to food appear on the screen		Mexican inspired instrumental
4	medium long shot	straight angle		music explosion sound	A woman in a wedding dress; her behind 'bulges', which is emphasised by an explosion sound and graphics; text: 'BATTLE THE BULGES' appears		Mexican inspired instrumental trumpets
5	medium long shot	straight level		music explosion sound	A woman in a wedding dress from the front, her hips "bulge", emphasised by the same sound and graphics as before, the text 'COMBAT THE CALORIES' appears		Mexican inspired instrumental
6	medium long shot	high angle		music	Nadeen is shown in the upper left corner kicking; Tommy is shown in the lower right corner pointing at the camera. There is a sign 'BRIDAL BOOTCAMP' that points to the right. Text: 'GORGING TO GORGEOUS'		Mexican inspired instrumental





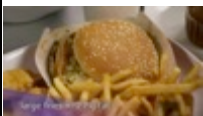

III

7	medium shot	straight level		music	A bride lifting weights; text: 'IN 6 WEEKS', the number 6 spins.		Mexican inspired instrumental
8	animation; long shot	straight level		music	An animation of a fat bride standing on a wedding cake, lifting weights. It says 'BULGING BRIDES' on the cake; it resembles a scale, with the tongue pointing to the right, indicating a high weight. The bride becomes slimmer as the tongue points towards the middle.		Instrumental coming to an end.




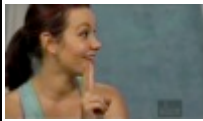

APPENDIX A
FILM PROTOCOL
BULGING BRIDES SCENE 2
AISLE OF SHAME

Take	Framing	Camera Angle	Screenshot	Sound	Contents	Spoken Text	Music
1	close-up	high angle		voice-over (Tommy) music	close-up of dessert	Sarah told us she eats	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
2	close-up	straight level		voice-over (Tommy) music	close-up of cake	rich desserts every night,	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
3	close-up	high angle		voice-over (Tommy) music	close-up of plate full of spaghetti	and has huge, high-	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
4	medium close-up	high angle		voice-over (Tommy) music	overview, then close up of table full of “unhealthy” meals	calorie meals every day.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
5	long shot	straight level		conversation music	Sarah and Nadeen are standing in a room set up as an aisle, displaying food on bar-tables.	Nadeen (N): Sarah, this is your aisle	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
6	medium long shot	straight level		conversation, music, sound effects (swooshing)	The title ‘AISLE OF Shame’ is displayed in the left lower corner.	of shame. This is where we find out about all of your bad eating habits. First stop along the way I like to call the	hip-hop inspired, instrumental




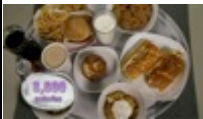


VI

7	medium close-up	high angle		conversation, music, sound effects (sound commonly associated with a spring/boing)	A table with different 'unhealthy' meals and drinks is shown from a high angle. In the left upper corner, it says 'Flab Attack'.	'Flab Attack'. You start the day	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
8	medium long shot	straight level		conversation, music	Nadeen mentions and points to different meals/drinks one after another. She looks at Sarah in a disappointed, judging way. Sarah awaits her assessment passively.	off with a coffee,	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
9	close-up	high angle		conversation, music	Close-up of Sarah's breakfast; Nadeen labels it as 'oversized'.	and an oversized muffin.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
10	medium long shot	straight level		conversation, music	Nadeen turns to Sarah's dinner, apparently not satisfied with her choice, stating 'dinner' in a rather critical way.	Dinner:	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
11	close-up	high angle		conversation, music; the sound of cackling chicken with the chicken nuggets	Nadeen stresses the ingredients and especially size of Sarah's dinner, pointing at each component. The meal's amount of fat can be seen in the left corner.	a double burger, large fries, and five fried chicken.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
12	close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Sarah shakes her head in disapproval of her own choices. Nadeen continues with her assessment.	Sarah (S): That's disgusting. N: You went on to have	hip-hop inspired, instrumental






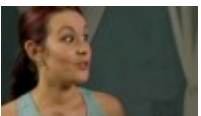
VII






13	close-up	high angle		conversation, music; with apple cobbler: emergency sirens	Close up of the apple cobbler.	two apple cobbler,	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
14	medium long shot	straight level		conversation, music, sirens.	Nadeen is pointing at the apple cobbler on the table surrounded by the other 'unhealthy' meal choices.	not just one, but two!	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
15	close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Sarah tries to explain herself.	S: It's like my treat, when the kids go to bed, I indulge myself.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
16	medium shot	straight level		conversation, music, biting noise	Nadeen reminds Sarah of the amount of apple cobbler she is eating.	N: Twice. S: Twice.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
17	medium close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Sarah tries to justify her choice by stating the number of kids she has, showing the number with her fingers.	S: I have two kids!	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
18	medium shot	straight level		conversation, music	Nadeen reminds her that the amount is remarkable. She points at the desserts.	N: Ok, that's one bowl of cobbler	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
19	medium close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Sarah laughs uncomfortably.	for each! S: Yeah.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental

VIII

20	medium long shot	straight level		conversation, music	Nadeen points at all the meals. Sarah is next to her, waiting, watching. She is supposed to guess the number of calories.	N: How many calories do you think are here? S: Thousand.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
21	close-up	straight level		conversation, music; 'error' - tone	Nadeen repeats Sarah's guess in a mocking way. Sarah learns that she is wrong, which is supported by a big red 'X' on her right side.	N: A thousand? Times by eight!	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
22	medium shot	straight level		conversation, music	Nadeen explains how many calories all the meals have. Sarah is embarrassed.	N: This is eighty-six	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
23	medium close-up	high angle		conversation, music, sound effect 'ka-ching'	High angle view of the table and meals. The amount of calories is shown in the left lower corner. Sound of a cash register.	hundred calories. S: Wow. N: Next stop:	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
24	medium long shot	straight level		conversation, music	Nadeen and Sarah proceed to the next table. Nadeen points towards all the meals, Sarah looks nervous.	the	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
25	medium close-up	high angle		conversation, music	High angle view of desserts (cake, cookies, whipped cream). The name of the 'stop' is displayed in the left lower corner.	Belly Buster. One apple cobbler a	hip-hop inspired, instrumental






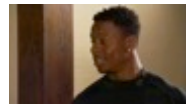
IX

26	medium shot	straight level		conversation, music; cow mooing when N. mentions the whipped cream.	Nadeen points to one dessert after another in an accusing way. The claim 'sugar suppresses immune system' is displayed in the left lower corner.	month, a fruit pie, two dozen cookies, a cheesecake and ten cups of whipped cream?!	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
27	medium close-up	straight level		conversation, music, mooing.	Sarah seems embarrassed.	S: Wow. N: That's ten	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
28	medium close-up	high angle		conversation, music, sound of cash register ('ka-ching').	High angle view of desserts. Nadeen explains the calories. Number of calories is displayed in the left lower corner, together with sound of cash register.	thousand calories. S: That's a lot.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
29	close-up/medium long shot	low angle		conversation, music	Low angle view of Sarah and Nadeen with a big pile of pasta and sauce in a close-up in the foreground. Nadeen proceeds to the next table.	N: Last stop along the line: I call this the	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
30	close-up	high angle		conversation, music; fanfares/trumpets	High angle view of a plate full of pasta and a white sauce. The title 'Carb Queen' is displayed in the left lower corner. Sound of trumpets with name.	'Carb Queen', which you are.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
31	close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Sarah looks at Nadeen surprised.	S: That's a huge amount.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental



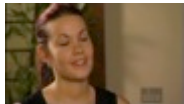

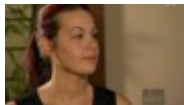

32	medium long shot	straight level		conversation, music	Nadeen stresses the amount Sarah eats pointing at the pile of pasta on the table.	N: You're consuming about four to five cups every time you sit down and eat it.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
33	close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Sarah seems embarrassed, lowers her head and presses her fists and arms against her chest.	S: Oh my god. N: So what that means is thirteen	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
34	close-up	high angle		conversation, music; cash-register ('ka-ching')	The amount of calories is shown (however, no measurements), cash register noise, close-up of pasta.	hundred calories are passed out one sitting. S: Shocking, and...	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
35	close-up	straight angle		conversation, music	Sarah in close-up reviewing her experience and making plans.	it's obvious why I can't fit into my dress and I need to change.	hip-hop inspired, instrumental
36	medium long shot	straight level		conversation, music	Last assessment, mentioning of 'bad eating habits' by Nadeen, plans for the further process. They proceed to the weigh-in.	N: Well now that we've taken a look at all your bad eating habits, let's see how that's affecting your body shape. Come on!	hip-hop inspired, instrumental

APPENDIX A
FILM PROTOCOL
BULGING BRIDES SCENE 3
FUTURE VISION





XII

Take	Framing	Camera Angle	Screenshot	Sound	Contents	Spoken Text	Music
1	long shot	straight level		dialogue; quiet music	Tommy and Sarah in front of a screen showing her body in underwear	Tommy (T): You're getting married soon!	ambient
2	close-up	straight level		dialogue; swoosh when text appears; quiet music	'Future Vision' is shown in the left lower corner	Sarah (S): Yeah. T: Many brides gain	ambient
3	medium close-up	straight level		Tommy talking; quiet music; 'swoosh' when text disappears	Tommy explains what happens after the marriage. 'Future Vision' is visible.	T: ten to fifteen pounds in the first year of marriage.	ambient
4	long shot	straight level		dialogue; quiet music	Tommy and Sarah watch Sarah's current body on the screen	T: This is you now.	ambient
5	close-up	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Sarah awaits Tommy's opinion; she is uncomfortable	T: Factor in inactivity, desserts,	ambient
6	medium close-up	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Tommy explains what Sarah's diet does to her body	this is what you could look like on your first anniversary.	ambient

XIII

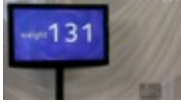

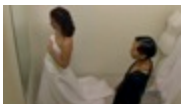

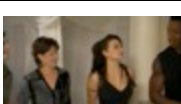
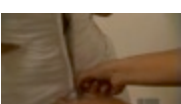
7	close-up/split screen long shot	straight level		quiet music	Split screen with a medium close-up of Sarah's face on the left and an animation of her body on the right. The thin body develops into a fat body. Sarah looks unhappy and shakes her head.		ambient
8	close-up	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Tommy asks about Sarah's feelings.	T: How does that make you feel?	ambient
9	close-up	straight level		Sarah's voice; music	Sarah shakes her head. Her voice is trembling as she answers Tommy's question.	S: That's disgusting.	ambient
10	close-up	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Tommy answer's Sarah's statement.	T: Well we don't want that.	ambient
11	close-up	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Sarah listens, nods.	T: And it doesn't have to be that way.	ambient
12	close-up	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Tommy explains what Sarah has to do in order to avoid the fat body.	T: If you follow the meal plan that Nadeen has set out for you,	ambient

XIV


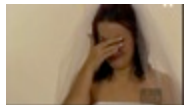


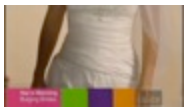

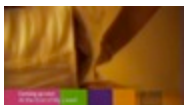
13	close-up	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Sarah has tears in her eyes, she listens to Tommy's explanations.	and the fitness plan,	ambient
14	medium long shot	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Tommy shows what Sarah's body could look like if she follows his plan. The body on the screen becomes thinner and thinner.	you could look like this!	ambient
15	close-up/split screen long shot	straight level		Sarah's voice; music; Tommy's voice	The thinner her body becomes in the animation on the split screen the happier Sarah looks. She nods and smiles.	S: Okay, that's better. T: You like that one? S: Yeah, that looks better. T: Does that make the tears disappear? S: Yes.	ambient
16	close-up	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Tommy explains what Sarah has to do.	T: Well, to get to that,	ambient
17	close-up	straight level		Tommy's voice; music	Sarah nods and looks happy and excited while Tommy explains what she has to do. They leave the room.	we got a lot of work to do! Let's go!	ambient

APPENDIX A
FILM PROTOCOL
BULGING BRIDES SCENE 4
FINAL FITTING OF THE DRESS


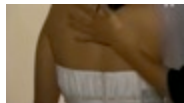



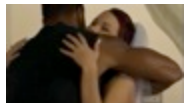
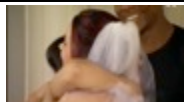
XVI

Take	Framing	Camera Angle	Screenshot	Sound	Contents	Spoken Text	Music
1	medium shot	straight level		voice-over (Sarah's voice) music	Sarah's final weight is displayed and she explains her feelings.	Sarah (S): Didn't matter to me the weight, or the inches	quiet instrumental
2	close-up	straight level		Sarah's voice music	Sarah explaining her feelings.	necessarily, it was more about	quiet instrumental
3	medium long shot	high angle		voice-over (Sarah) music	High angle view of Sarah and the Seamstress in a changing room; Sarah looks at her reflection in the mirror.	being comfortable in my own skin again.	quiet instrumental
4	long shot	high angle		voice-over (Sarah) music	Tommy and Nadeen wait in front of the changing room; Tommy waves and tells the family to come closer; Sarah's mother and sisters enter the set	Tommy (T): As a surprise, I invited Sarah's mom and sisters,	quiet instrumental
5	medium shot	straight level		voice-over (Sarah) music	medium shot of Sarah's family and Nadeen waiting eagerly.	who are so excited to see the results of	quiet instrumental
6	close up	straight level		conversation, music,	Close-up of the Seamstress zipping up Sarah's dress.	her hard work. Are you guys ready yet? Seamstress (SE): Ok guys, she's ready!	quiet instrumental



XVII

7	medium long shot	straight level		music	Sarah exits the changing room and reveals her 'new' body.	Family: Aaw! Ooh!	quiet instrumental
8	medium close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Sarah sees her family and is surprised; she starts crying. Nadeen comments on this.	Family: Aaw! Ooh! S: Ooh! Nadeen (N): Oh oh! Tears! T: Come on now!	quiet instrumental
9	medium close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Close-up of the family looking at Sarah, they look surprised and excited.	T: Come on now! Family: Ooh. Aah. N: They're here to see	quiet instrumental
10	close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Sarah cries and is emotional. Tommy puts his arm around her.	how beautiful you look! (Laughter) N: wooh! Aaaaaaw!	quiet instrumental
11	medium close-up	straight level		conversation, music	The camera moves to show Sarah's body from the bottom to the top.	T: What do you guys think? Family: Looks really good. Wow. Absolutely gorgeous.. Look how skinny she...	quiet instrumental
12	medium close-up	straight level		conversation, music	The seamstress explains details about the dress and how it fits.	SE: Ah. Well guys, remember in the very beginning,	quiet instrumental
13	close-up	straight level		Seamstress' voice, music	Retrospect of the first fitting of the dress; a close-up of the seamstress doing up the zipper; it does not go as smoothly as now; it looks 'too small'	where we did up the zipper and I was afraid that the zipper was going to break?	quiet instrumental

XVIII

14	medium close-up	straight level		Seamstress' voice, music	The seamstress explains how well Sarah's dress fits now. Sarah's upper body is shown in a close-up, her head is cut off.	Well now we did it up with absolutely no problem. There's room to	quiet instrumental
15	medium shot	straight level		Seamstress' voice, music	The seamstress explains while the family looks proud.	breathe in the waist, it fits great in the bust,	quiet instrumental
16	close-up	straight level		Seamstress' voice, music	The seamstress explains how well Sarah's dress fits now. Sarah's upper body is shown in a close-up, her head is cut off.	if you could just turn around. Look at this back! Family: Ooh. Yeah! Nice!	quiet instrumental
17	close-up	straight level		voices, music	The family watches as the seamstress explains.	Family: Wow! SE: Gorgeous!	quiet instrumental
18	medium close-up	straight level		Voices, music	Sarah is emotional. The seamstress gives her a small hug.	SE: Good job! Family: Wow!	quiet instrumental
19	medium close-up	straight level		voices, music	Tommy tells Sarah that she is ready now.	T: So I think you are definitely ready to stroll down the aisle. I'm gonna miss you.	quiet instrumental
20	medium close-up	straight level		voice, music	Tommy and Sarah hug.	S: Aaaw. That's so nice.	quiet instrumental.
21	medium close-up	straight level		conversation, laughter, music	Sarah and Nadeen hug.	N: Come. Voice-over Sarah: I had no idea my family	quiet instrumental

XIX

22	medium shot	straight level		Sarah's voice, music	Sarah straightening her dress.	was gonna be here.	quiet instrumental
23	close-up	straight level		Sarah's voice, music	Sarah crying. She is wearing a veil. She then starts smiling.	(Sarah, sobbing): Oh no. I'm so glad they were here. And I feel really good. And happy and proud of myself.	quiet instrumental















APPENDIX B

FILM PROTOCOL

MY BIG FAT REVENGE SCENE 1

OPENING SCENE

XXI

Take	Framing	Camera Angle	Screenshot	Sound	Contents	Spoken Text	Music
1	animation	straight level	             	<p>4 male and 2 female voices; when the words crash into the other words or the ground- explosion/crash noises; loud crash noise when 'BIG FAT REVENGE' crashes into the wall of words; music in the background</p>	<p>The words: THUNDER THINGS</p> <p>THE INCREDIBLE BULK</p> <p>ELEPHANT</p> <p>PORK CHOP</p> <p>FATTY</p> <p>LARDASS are falling into the picture and 'crashing into the ground'. They form a wall. The title 'MY BIG FAT REVENGE' bursts through the wall of words, crashes and destroys it. The title stays.</p>	<p>Man: Thunder thighs</p> <p>Woman: The incredible bulk</p> <p>Man: Elephant</p> <p>Man: Pork Chop</p> <p>Woman: Fatty</p> <p>Man: Lardass</p> <p>Woman: Enough is enough. I'm in control now!</p>	<p>quiet, instrumental</p>







APPENDIX B

FILM PROTOCOL





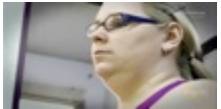


MY BIG FAT REVENGE SCENE 2

HILLARY'S STORY

XXIII





Take	Framing	Camera Angle	Screenshot	Sound	Contents	Spoken Text	Music
1	Picture	Picture		voice-over (Hillary) music	Picture of Hillary and her ex-boyfriend Alex wearing a party hat and smiling. Hillary's voice is explaining her story.	And then Alex started getting more	instrumental
2	close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice music	Close-up of Hillary in front of a blue background talking about her experiences. She is looking sad.	vocal about his feelings.	instrumental
3	medium close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice music	Medium close-up of Hillary talking about her experiences.	He would do things like he would pinch under my arm and I'd be like:	instrumental
4	close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice, music	Close-up of Hillary talking about her experiences.	Alex, why are you pinching me?	instrumental
5	medium close-up	pan shot from bottom to top; low angle to straight level		voice-over (Hillary), music, screeching noise	Hillary's body in underwear in a bathroom from the side. She is pinching her underarm fat.	He would just say: Oh well,	instrumental
6	close-up	straight level		voice-over (Hillary) music	Close-up of Hillary pinching her arm-fat.	I don't think you realise how big you are so I figure if I pinch you,	instrumental

XXIV

7	close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice music	Hillary explains her story; she looks hurt.	then you'll	instrumental
8	medium close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice music	Hillary tells her story. She is sitting in front of the blue background.	realise that and you'll be more serious about losing the weight.	instrumental
9	close-up	low angle		voice-over (Hillary), music	Hillary's voice explains what her ex-boyfriend did while she is shown pinching her chin; she is standing in the bathroom.	He would call me 'Gobbles' because of the skin under my chin,	instrumental
10	medium close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice music	Hillary explains and demonstrates what her ex-boyfriend used to do. She pinches her chin.	like he would grab it and try to shake it.	instrumental
11	close-up	low angle		voice-over (Hillary), music	Close-up of Hillary's face, then zoom to her breasts. She is standing in the bathroom wearing underwear.	And then it actually became	instrumental
12	medium close-up	straight level		voice-over (Hillary), music	Hillary in the bathroom from the back, her face is visible in the mirror.	a little bit more escalated. He would like jump	instrumental
13	close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice, music	Hillary explains what the ex-boyfriend did.	on my back, braidably,	instrumental

14	medium close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice, music	Hillary is telling her story.	he would be like walk! He was like you'll burn more calories	instrumental
15	picture	picture		voice-over (Hillary), music	Hillary explains; a picture of her ex-boyfriend with a cake is displayed.	just by walking around with me on your back. I was actually some kind of animal.	instrumental
16	close-up	straight level		voice-over (Hillary) music	Hillary's voice explains, her face is visible, she looks hurt.	It was really kind of like	instrumental
17	close-up	high angle		voice-over (Hillary), music	Hillary's hands are shown, illustrating her feeling uncomfortable.	an abusive relationship.	instrumental
18	picture	picture		voice-over (Hillary), music	Picture of Alex and Hillary looking Happy while Hillary's voice explains the story.	I actually gained quite a bit of weight	instrumental
19	medium close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice music	Hillary explains.	during this relationship because I was so stressed out and so unhappy.	instrumental
20	medium close-up	straight level		voice-over (Hillary), music	Hillary is seen from behind; she is standing in front of a bathroom mirror. She is wearing underwear and pinches her stomach.	Subconsciously I was being rebellious cause I had somebody who was	instrumental

XXVI

21	picture	picture		voice-over (Hillary), music	Picture of Alex and a dog is displayed.	always talking about my weight. Always talking about how...	instrumental
22	medium close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice music	Hillary in her underwear in the bathroom talking about what her ex-boyfriend did to her.	you know, how I needed to loose weight, how we couldn't be together or	instrumental
23	picture	picture		voice-over (Hillary), music	Picture of Alex, Hillary explains.	get married unless I lost the weight cause he wanted a hot trophy wife.	instrumental
24	medium close-up	straight level		Hillary's voice music	Hillary in her underwear in the bathroom talking about what her ex-boyfriend did to her.	I think rebelliously like I was eating more and stressing out more	instrumental
25	picture	picture		voice-over (Hillary), music	Picture of Hillary eating some kind of food.	and so I gained quite a bit of weight.	instrumental







APPENDIX B

FILM PROTOCOL







MY BIG FAT REVENGE SCENE 3


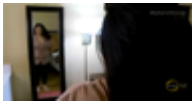
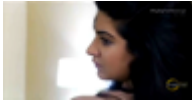
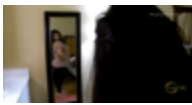



PARDIS'S STORY






XXVIII

Take	Framing	Camera Angle	Screenshot	Sound	Contents	Spoken Text	Music
1	medium close-up	low angle		music	A shisha is shown in a café.		instrumental
2	medium long shot	straight level		music	Interior of café.		instrumental
3	close-up/medium long shot	high angle		voice-over (Pardis), music	Interior of café and two women having a conversation; Pardis explains.	Pardis: I'm Iranian and in our culture there is a	instrumental
4	long shot	slight high angle		voice-over (Pardis), music	Interior of café and two women having a conversation; Pardis explains.	big expectation.	instrumental
5	medium close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Pardis in front of a blue background, explaining her culture.	Men are	instrumental
6	picture	picture		voice-over (Pardis), music	Picture of Pardis and her family is displayed.	judged on their success,	instrumental

XXIX

7	picture	picture		voice-over (Pardis), music	A picture of Pardis and a friend is shown while she explains.	and women – we need to look good. Girls who are young, my age:	instrumental
8	medium close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Medium close-up of Pardis in front of a blue background; she explains her culture.	Botox, collagen,	instrumental
9	close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Close-up of Pardis in front of a blue background; she explains her culture.	boob-implants, lipo!	instrumental
10	medium close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Medium close-up of Pardis in front of a blue background; she explains her culture.	You have women spending thousands of dollars on themselves trying to make themselves look like Barbies.	instrumental
11	close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Close-up of Pardis in front of a blue background; she explains her culture.	It's disgusting.	instrumental
12	picture	picture		voice-over (Pardis), music	Picture of Pardis and a friend.	And I'm clearly not doing what I'm supposed to be doing. Because right now, I'm	instrumental
13	medium close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Pardis in front of the blue background talking about her weight.	two hundred and thirty-three pounds.	instrumental

14	medium close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Pardis in front of the blue background talking about herself.	<i>Pardis is speaking Farsi</i>	instrumental
15	Medium long shot	straight level		voice-over (Pardis), music	Pardis looking at herself in a mirror.	In Farsi that means like it's a	instrumental
16	close-up	straight level		voice-over (Pardis), music	Pardis's face in close-up, she is looking at herself in the mirror.	waste cause your face is	instrumental
17	medium long shot	straight level		voice-over (Pardis), music	Pardis is looking at her body in the mirror from different angles.	pretty.	instrumental
18	medium close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Pardis in front of a blue background explaining the meaning of the saying in Farsi.	You know, it's a waste that my face	instrumental
19	medium close-up	straight level		conversation, music	Close-up of Pardis's face, she looks unhappy.	is attached to this body.	instrumental
20	pan; medium shot	straight level		voice-over (Pardis), music	The camera pans over Pardis's body while she is doing up her shirt and looking at herself in the mirror. She looks uncomfortable.	There is this idea that	instrumental

21	close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Close-up of Pardis explaining; she looks agitated.	Middle Eastern women	instrumental
22	medium close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Pardis explains the beauty standards.	need to be skinny and curvy at the same time which is	instrumental
23	medium close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Pardis explains the beauty standards and clearly disapproves, she swears.	fucking (beeped out) impossible.	instrumental
24	picture (medium shot)	straight level		voice-over (Pardis), music	Picture of Pardis in a sweater and shorts is displayed while she explains.	I laugh about it usually.	instrumental
25	medium close-up	straight level		Pardis's voice music	Pardis explains her feelings.	Past the laugh, you know, I feel like shit (beeped out).	instrumental


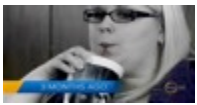



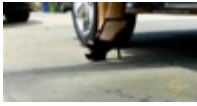

APPENDIX B

FILM PROTOCOL








MY BIG FAT REVENGE SCENE 4

HILLARY BEFORE/AFTER

XXXIII



Take	Framing	Camera Angle	Screenshot	Sound	Contents	Spoken Text	Music
1	medium close-up	low angle		voice-over (Hillary), music	Retrospective in dark colours of Hillary reaching for a cup. The caption '3 months ago' is displayed in the lower left corner.	Hillary: When I started this journey I weighed two hundred eighty-nine	slow instrumental
2	close-up	low angle		voice-over (Hillary), music	Retrospective in dark colours of Hillary drinking from a fast-food cup. The caption "3 months ago" is displayed in the lower left corner.	pounds and I felt	slow instrumental
3	medium close-up	straight level		voice-over (Hillary), music	Retrospective in dark colours of Hillary pinching her arm. She explains her feelings.	hopeless and sad	slow instrumental
4	close-up	straight level		voice-over (Hillary), music	Retrospective in dark colours of Hillary pinching her arm. She explains her feelings.	and dark.	slow instrumental
5	extreme close-up	straight level		voice-over (Hillary), music	Close up of a car-door opening, a hand pushing the door outwards. Hillary explains the situation.	And now... This is the first time I was able to look at myself and see	uplifting, bright instrumental
6	medium close-up	slight high angle		voice-over (Hillary), music	Feet in high heels exiting the car. Hillary explains the situation.	something I liked in my entire life.	uplifting, bright instrumental
7	medium long shot	straight level		music	The family is waiting for Hillary in the sunshine. They look excited.		uplifting, positive instrumental

XXXIV

8	medium shot	straight level		excited screams, music	The bottom half/skirt of a dress (supposedly Hillary's) becomes visible as the person walks around a corner towards the other people.		uplifting, positive instrumental
9	medium close-up	straight level		excited screams, woohing, music	The family sees Hillary for the first time, they make surprised noises and clap.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
10	medium close-up	straight level		excited screams music	Some family members looking happy and excited; they are clapping.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
11	medium close-up (pan shot)	straight level		excited screams, clapping, music	Pan-shot from bottom to top that reveals that the woman in the dress is indeed Hillary. She smiles as she walks towards the family.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
12	medium long shot/medium close-up(zoom)	straight level		very excited screams, music	Hillary's mother looks surprised and gasps when she sees her daughter.	wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
13	medium long shot	straight angle		clapping, excited screams, music	Hillary 'before' the weight loss in a white studio, the caption '3 months ago' is displayed in the lower left corner.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
14	medium long shot	straight level		clapping, excited screams, music	The shot fades into Hillary's 'after' situation, she is standing on the grass, waving her dress, looking happy and proud.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental

15	close-up	straight level		clapping, excited screams, music	The family is shown; they are surprised and happy.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
16	medium shot (pan shot)	straight level		clapping, excited screams, music	The camera moves from Hillary's feet to her face to show off her whole 'new' body.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
17	medium close-up	straight level		clapping, excited screams, music	Some more family members are shown; they clap and laugh and are surprised and happy.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
18	medium long shot	straight level		laughing, clapping, excited screams music	Hillary and her mother walk towards each other.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
19	medium close-up	straight level		laughing, clapping, music	Hillary and her mother hug.	Family: wooh!	uplifting, positive instrumental
20	close-up	straight level		Hillary's mother's voice (off screen), music	Hillary and her mother hug while the mother explains her feelings off screen.	Hillary's mother: I'm just so happy for her.	uplifting, positive instrumental
21	medium close-up	straight level		Hillary's mother's voice, music	Medium close-up of Hillary's mother; she explains how happy she is.	She seems so confident and so	uplifting, positive instrumental

XXXVI

22	medium close-up (pan shot)	low angle		Hillary's mother's voice (off screen), music	Pan-shot from Hillary's face to her feet, showing off her 'new' body once again while the mother expresses her feelings.	totally transformed, I mean... I'm just so excited, I can't	uplifting, positive instrumental
23	medium close-up	straight level		Hillary's mother's voice, music	Medium close-up of Hillary's mother; she is emotional, but happy and laughs and explains her feelings.	contain myself.	uplifting, positive instrumental